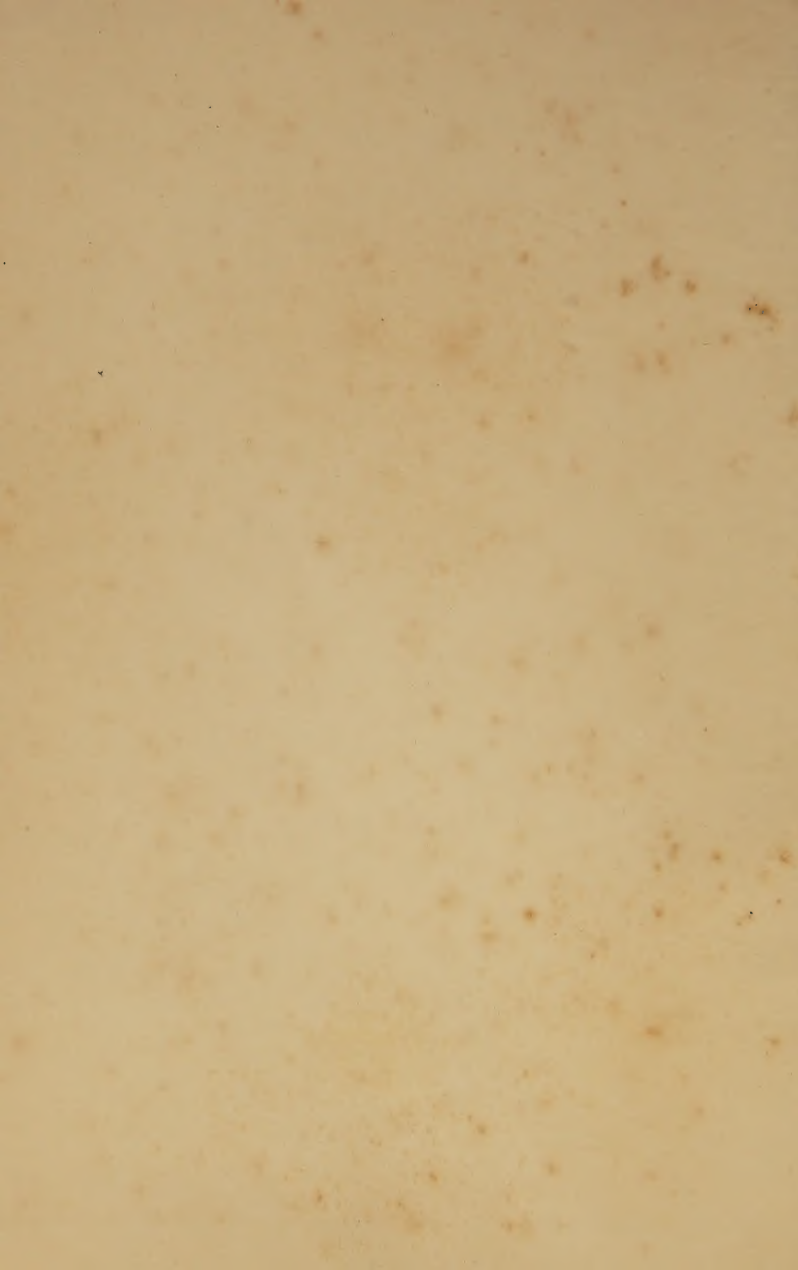




2







HISTORY  
OF  
EAST & WEST HAM.

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BY  
DR. PAGENstecher.

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*Motto :*

He who loves not his country  
Can love nothing.

*Byron.*

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## P R E F A C E.

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In producing this book I cannot but express the hope that it may some day be introduced into our Schools. It is intended to supply a want hitherto unsupplied. It portrays the two parishes of East and West Ham, tracing their growth from villages in the fields to suburban towns, and records the historical events which in the early life of England have taken place in this part of the country.

The famous Swiss school-teacher lays it down as a fundamental principle "that the knowledge of the home and its surroundings should be the starting point and the centre of instruction in history." It is, unquestionably, most essential that we should know something about the locality in which we live. We often know a great deal more about other places and other countries than we know about our own immediate neighbourhood. The reason, probably, is that we do not think it worth while to enquire about things and objects with which we are so familiar, and which do not appear to us of peculiar interest.

Though this book is primarily destined for use in our Schools, I am not without hope that it may also prove interesting to the general public. My chief desire is to arouse the interest of our children in local history, and to inspire them with the feeling of patriotic pride in their native place, for all patriotism begins with a love of what is nearest.

"Knit to thy heart the dear, the early ties  
Which bind thee to thy country; hold that fast  
And cling to it with thy whole heart and soul.  
Here are the mighty roots of all thy power."

Translated from SCHILLER.





# CONTENTS.

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CHAPTER I.	PAGE.
Early Inhabitants of Essex — Roman Occupation — Roman Remains .. .. .	1
CHAPTER II.	
Roman Roads—Bishop Erkenwald .. .. .	7
CHAPTER III.	
Barking Abbey—Fire Bell Gate—Curfew Bell .. .. .	13
CHAPTER IV.	
Saxon and Danish Invasions—Bishop Mellitus—Alfred the Great .. .. .	18
CHAPTER V.	
Norman Occupation—Domesday Book—Aleston and Leured, the Saxon Proprietors .. .. .	24
CHAPTER VI.	
William the Conqueror — Robert Gernon — William de Montfichet .. .. .	30
CHAPTER VII.	
Queen Maud—Bow and Channelsea Bridges .. .. .	35
CHAPTER VIII.	
Bow Bridge—Litigation about Repairs .. .. .	40

CONTENTS.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER IX.	PAGE.
Foundation of West Ham Abbey—The Monks .. ..	46
CHAPTER X.	
History of the Abbey—Henry III.—Countess of Salisbury ..	51
CHAPTER XI.	
Spread of Reformation—John Wyclif .. ..	55
CHAPTER XII.	
Dissolution of the Abbey—Thomas Cromwell .. ..	59
CHAPTER XIII.	
Plan and Remains of the Abbey—Abbey Mills .. ..	64
CHAPTER XIV.	
Parish Church of West Ham .. ..	71
CHAPTER XV.	
Monuments and Registers .. ..	76
CHAPTER XVI.	
Thomas Rose, Vicar of West Ham Church—Dr. Dodd ..	81
CHAPTER XVII.	
Queen Mary and the Martyrs .. ..	86
CHAPTER XVIII.	
Will Kemp .. ..	96
CHAPTER XIX.	
West Ham a Parliamentary and Municipal Borough—The Council—Tramways .. ..	102
CHAPTER XX.	
Sanitation—Recreation Grounds .. ..	106

CONTENTS.—*Continued.*

	CHAPTER XXI.	PAGE.
Charitable Institutions .. .. .	.. .. .	110
	CHAPTER XXII.	
Church and School .. .. .	.. .. .	114
	CHAPTER XXIII.	
School Board—Libraries .. .. .	.. .. .	119
	CHAPTER XXIV.	
Technical Institute .. .. .	.. .. .	124
	CHAPTER XXV.	
Stratford—Old Mansions—Lord Henniker—Forest Courts— Essex Calves .. .. .	.. .. .	132
	CHAPTER XXVI.	
Town Hall—St. John's Church—Martyrs' Memorial—George Edwards, the Ornithologist—Tom Hood .. .. .	.. .. .	140
	CHAPTER XXVII.	
Epping Forest .. .. .	.. .. .	147
	CHAPTER XXVIII.	
Epping Hunt .. .. .	.. .. .	152
	CHAPTER XXIX.	
Forest Gate .. .. .	.. .. .	157
	CHAPTER XXX.	
A Foul Deed of Treachery .. .. .	.. .. .	161
	CHAPTER XXXI.	
Upton—The Spotted Dog—Lord Lister—Samuel Gurney— West Ham Park—Elizabeth Fry .. .. .	.. .. .	165
	CHAPTER XXXII.	
Plaistow—The Rev. R. W. B. Marsh .. .. .	.. .. .	173

CONTENTS.—*Continued.*

CHAPTER XXXIII.	PAGE.
Hyde House—Chesterton House—Plaistow Hall—Cumberland House—Essex House .. .. .	178
CHAPTER XXXIV.	
Friends' Meeting House—St. Mary's Church—Poets of Plaistow	185
CHAPTER XXXV.	
Dick Turpin .. .. .	190
CHAPTER XXXVI.	
South West Ham—The Docks—The Devil's House ..	196
CHAPTER XXXVII.	
East Ham—The Old Parish Church—Monuments—Dr. Stukeley	201
CHAPTER XXXVIII.	
Anne Boleyn's Castle .. .. .	208
CHAPTER XXXIX.	
Electric Tramways—Public Parks—Hospitals—Embankment of River—Kent in Essex .. .. .	213
CHAPTER XL.	
Church and School—Libraries .. .. .	219
CHAPTER XLI.	
East Ham Incorporated—Town Hall—Police Station ..	224
CHAPTER XLII.	
The River Roding .. .. .	228
Conclusion .. .. .	231
POEMS.	
The Curfew .. .. .	17
The Norman Baron .. .. .	33
The Windmill .. .. .	70
Martyrs .. .. .	95
Plaistow .. .. .	188



## CHAPTER I.

Rome, for empire far renown'd,  
Tramples on a thousand states;  
Soon her pride shall kiss the ground—  
Hark! the Gaul is at her gates.

COWPER. (Boadicea.)

### EARLY INHABITANTS OF ESSEX.

#### ROMAN OCCUPATION AND ROMAN REMAINS.



THE two parishes of East and West Ham derive their name from an ancient village called "Ham," which means "home," or "residence." They occupy the south-west corner of the County of Essex, between the confluences of the river Lea and the river Roding with the Thames. On the north they are bounded by Leyton and Wanstead, on the south by the Thames. They belong to the Hundred of Beacontree. The name of Beacontree owes its origin to an important beacon which formerly stood on Windmill Hill, near Woodford. Such beacons were—as Morant observes in his history of Essex—"a precaution necessary before the increase of our naval strength made us masters of the sea."

In ancient times the Counties of England were divided into "Hundreds." The origin of this division is exceedingly obscure. Different opinions have been given, but it is very probable that each "Hundred" originally consisted of a hundred families.

In bygone days this district, which embraces the two parishes, was covered by a dense forest, which extended throughout the greater part of Essex "as far as the sea," and down to the river Thames.

The boundaries of this immense forest have, in course of time, been sadly curtailed; that, which now forms the forests of Epping and Hainault and is devoted to the recreation of the people, is but a small fragment of the ancient forest.

Like the rest of England, the County of Essex was originally inhabited by the ancient Britons. They were a tribe of the Celts, and had come over from the Continent to settle in this country more than 2,000 years ago. They were a fierce and valiant race. Trustworthy historians assert that Essex was one of their first settlements.

Although we have no historic knowledge, it seems certain, from the evidence of many stone implements found in the country, that the Celts were preceded in their occupation of it by other, yet ruder, tribes of men. Until the Romans invaded Britain the history of England is almost a

blank. It was in 55 B.C. that the Roman Emperor Julius Cæsar landed on the Kentish shore. Notwithstanding many a sanguinary battle, he did not meet with much success, for the Britons were brave fighters. Nor was his second expedition in the following year more successful; it was a complete failure as far as conquest went. As Shakespeare tells us in "Cymbeline" (Act 3. 1):—

"A kind of conquest  
Cæsar made here; but made not here his brag  
Of 'Came' and 'Saw' and 'Overcame';—with shame  
(The first that ever touched him)—he was carried  
From off our coast twice beaten;—and his shipping,  
(Poor ignorant baubles!) on our terrible seas,  
Like egg-shells mov'd upon their surges, cracked  
As easily 'gainst our rocks."

Nearly a whole century elapsed before the Emperor Claudius attempted its definite conquest A.D. 43. After many battles and reverses of fortune, the ancient Britons were at last obliged to bend their necks to the yoke of the invaders. At that time Essex became a fierce battlefield. For nearly four centuries did the Romans keep possession of the greater part of Britain. In the beginning of the fifth century the last of the well-trained legions were hastily called home to defend their own imperial City. Little did the Roman imagine, as he left our shores and looked back upon the island, that it was destined one day to become an Empire exceeding his own in extent of dominion, and rivalling it in art and civilisation.

Although we have no official records, it is evident from the discoveries made in modern times, that this district was at some time or other occupied by the Romans. During the construction of the northern Metropolitan Sewer, which passes through the West Ham and Plaistow marshes, a Roman cemetery was discovered near East Ham Church in the year 1863. While excavating the workmen came unexpectedly upon a large stone coffin, within which were two skeletons, lying at opposite ends, one larger than the other. A skull was at each end, and in one of them the teeth were complete; the whole skeleton, indeed, being very perfect. When first found one of the skeletons was entire, and but little decayed.

Two leaden coffins were also discovered, and close to them many bones and funeral urns, containing the ashes of dead bodies, which had been consumed by fire instead of being buried. Persons skilled in such matters pronounced both the stone and the leaden coffins to be undoubtedly Roman, although no date could be traced. These remains of antiquity must be at least 1,500 years old. After having been open to public view for about six weeks in the porch of the East Ham Church, the two leaden coffins were taken to be deposited in the British Museum, where they may still be seen.

Roman remains were also found at Barking. There are yet visible the remains of extensive earth-





PORCH OF EAST HAM CHURCH.

works at Uphall Farm, which is about a quarter of a mile distant from the town, on the left hand side of the road leading to Ilford. It is supposed that the Romans had an encampment or a military station here. Part of the earthworks has, in course of time, been levelled. Nearly the whole of the land, over which the plough passed only a few years ago, is now covered with houses.

The most interesting portion of this estate includes a grass covered mound, of 28 feet in



MOUND AT UPHALL FARM.

height, which abuts on the river Roding. A century ago it was covered with trees. What its original use was can only be conjectured. It probably served the purpose of a post of observation in troublous days, for it commanded a good view over the surrounding flat country. This spot has been purchased by a well-known old-established firm at Stratford, which has within recent years erected some chemical works on this estate. There is every reason to believe that this historical relic of ancient days will be carefully preserved.

## CHAPTER II.

Departed is the pious saint,  
 God's blessing on his soul.

REDIVIVA.

## ROMAN ROADS. BISHOP ERKENWALD.

There can be no doubt that the road leading from West Ham to Plashet and East Ham, called "Portway," derived its name from its Roman origin, Portway being a corruption of "porta viae," which means "gate-way." This road led to North End in East Ham and thence down a lane, formerly called Jews'-Farm Lane, now known as East Avenue, over the river Roding to the Roman encampment at Uphall Farm.

When the Romans first came into Britain they found merely tracks through the forests, extending for many miles. But as these tracks were very narrow and ill-suited to the purpose of this military nation, they set to work to make good means of communication. Indeed, nearly all the chief roads now existing in England were made during the time of the Roman occupation. It is a recognised fact

that, from the time of their armies leaving our shores at the beginning of the fifth century until the sixteenth century, few, if any, new roads were made.

A list of Roman roads has been preserved, from which we learn that there were about fifteen chief roads traversing the whole of England from east to west and from south to north. The Romans displayed considerable engineering skill in making their roads, and spent much time and money upon this important work. A Roman road consisted of five distinct layers, and was generally about fifteen feet wide. One of the most remarkable features of the Roman roads was the extraordinary straightness of their course.

There are scarcely any records of the period which followed the departure of the Romans from Britain. We possess, however, official proof that the marshes, bordering on the Thames in what is now called the Parish of East Ham, were profitable land in Anglo-Saxon times.

It is reported that Offa, one of the later Kings of the East Saxons, gave to the Monastery of St. Peter's, Westminster, "two hides of land." A hide of land is an old English measure of land, frequently mentioned in Domesday book and other old chronicles. Its contents are uncertain, but are stated to have been about one hundred acres. In



an ancient document, dated 1542, this property of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster was described as "a farm in the marshes of East Ham."

After having been in their possession for over twelve hundred years, a portion of this estate was sold by the Dean and Chapter, and afterwards converted into the North Woolwich Gardens. Unfortunately, as time went on, the Gardens acquired an undesirable reputation, and a movement was set on foot to make them public property. The required sum of £20,000 having been collected, the Gardens were thrown open to the public, and are now (since 1890) under the control of the London County Council.

There is a curious legend relating to the aforementioned King Offa. He fell in love with a princess of Mercia, but she had no ambition to become Queen of Essex. Now it was a serious matter for a maiden to refuse a King in those days. If the royal lover failed to win a lady's heart, he claimed the right of slaughtering a few hundred of her kinsmen in her father's castle, as proof of the strength of his attachment. The princess, a lady of great piety, prevailed upon him to embrace a monastic life. She succeeded. Offa resigned his crown, proceeded to Rome, and turned Monk.

The old Roman road leading from London into the Eastern Counties passed along the northern

extremities of the parishes of East and West Ham. Crossing the river Lea at Old Ford, it led through the Leyton marshes to Stratford, and so on to Ilford, Romford, Ingatestone, Chelmsford, and Colchester, as far as Caistor, near Yarmouth, where the Romans had a camp.

The earliest mention of this road, which in this part of Essex is called the Romford road, is on the occasion of the death of Erkenwald, Bishop of London. Whilst he was on a visit to his sister, Ethelburga, the first abbess of the Convent of Barking, he died there in the year 685. It is said of him that he discharged his episcopal duties with great piety and zeal. Even when aged and infirm he was carried about in a litter from place to place, constantly teaching and instructing his people till his death.

In a work entitled "The Golden Legend," dated 1527, a description is given of the circumstances which attended the removal of his corpse from Barking Abbey to St. Paul's Cathedral, in the City of London. When the high canons of St. Paul heard of the death of their Bishop, they came to Barking and claimed the body, but the nuns would not give it up, because the Bishop had died there, and was also the founder of the Abbey.

There was great strife. However, at last, the Canons of St. Paul carried the body off towards London. Then there arose a great tempest, and

the river at Ilford swelled to such an extent, that they could not pass the ford. From this the nuns argued, that it was God's will that the Canons of London were not to have the body. After much strife a Clerk, who had belonged to Erkenwald, strode up and commanded silence, and prayed that God would show them some sign in which place this holy body should rest.

To this they all agreed, and kneeling down they prayed. While they were thus engaged they suddenly saw the water miraculously divide, as it did to Moses in the Red Sea. Then they bore the body through the ford, the water standing up on either side, and the people not wetting their feet. So they came to Stratford and set down the bier in a fair meadow full of flowers, and finally conveyed the body to the City with great honour and reverence.

So highly was the memory of St. Erkenwald revered, that in the reign of Stephen (1148) a magnificent tomb was erected against the east wall of St. Paul's Cathedral, into which his bones were transferred with great solemnity. Vast sums of money were expended from time to time in adorning it with gold, silver, and precious stones, and frequent miracles were said to be wrought at his tomb.

Though it were folly to give full credence to the above legend, yet, since the event occurred

about 685—two hundred and fifty years after the Romans left Britain—it goes far to prove, that the road between London and Barking passed through the sites of the present towns of Ilford and Stratford. It also shows, that along the line of the present highway a road did exist in Saxon or even Roman times.



## CHAPTER III.

How soon a tale of ages may be told,  
A page, a verse records the fall of fame.

HEMANS.

## BARKING ABBEY.

It may be of interest to say a few words about Barking Abbey, which was one of the richest and oldest Abbeys in England, and said to have been the first monastery for women established in this Kingdom. It was founded about A.D. 670 for Benedictine nuns by Erkenwald, the first Bishop of London, who was closely allied to the Saxon monarchs. Many of the abbesses were of royal blood, and so through their influence the Abbey was brought into great prominence.

The Lady Abbess of Barking occupied a very influential position, and was one of the four, who were Baronesses in right of their station, holding her lands direct of the Crown. Of course, her sex prevented her from having a seat in Parliament. The other three Abbesses were those of Wilton, Shaftesbury, and St. Mary's, Winchester, but the Abbess of Barking took precedence over all of them. In 870 the Abbey was laid in a heap of ruins by the ruthless Danes, but rebuilt about the middle of

the tenth century. It was surrendered to Henry VIII. in the year 1539.

Considering that this rich and powerful Abbey was favoured by royal and noble benefactors, we cannot but wonder that so little remains of this far-famed Benedictine foundation. Yet the only remaining fragment of the monastic building is a Gate-way tower of two storeys, with an embattled



FIRE BELL GATE AT BARKING.

parapet and an octagonal turret at one angle, rising above the parapet.



This ancient gate-way stands at the entrance to the parish church-yard, and is a picturesque relic.

In the upper stage of the tower is a room, once used as "The Chapel of the Holy Rood." A representation in stone of the Holy Rood or Crucifixion is still to be seen against the wall in one corner of the chapel. Within the walls of the tower a bell used to hang, which was in all probability used for the curfew, in William the Conqueror's time. As the curfew bell was as well a note of alarm as an indication of the hour of rest, this ancient gate-way was, and is still, called the "Fire Bell Gate."

The tolling of the curfew bell, at eight o'clock in the evening in winter and at sunset in summer, was a regulation in force throughout all Europe in the middle ages. It was a signal, that prayers should be offered, and all people should get within their homes and extinguish their fires. This odd mixture of piety and advice—says the historian Freeman—seems to be the origin of the famous and often misrepresented curfew. But whatever was the origin, the statement, that it was introduced by William the Conqueror as any special hardship on his English subjects, rests on no early historical evidence.

It seems, however, highly probable that William merely enforced an existing and very

common police regulation. The primary purpose of the curfew was, no doubt, a precaution against accidents from domestic fires. It was a most useful regulation at a time when houses were built of wood, and the fire, as a rule, was made in the middle of the floor under an opening in the roof to allow the escape of the smoke.

In the year 1103 the compulsory curfew bell was abolished in England, but it lingered on as a custom almost everywhere. It is really surprising in how many places the practice of ringing the curfew bell is still continued, among others in Harlow, Buckingham, Sandwich, Kidderminster, etc. Of course the sounds of the bell are no longer heard as a signal for putting out fires as in the days of old.

At West Ham the custom fell into disuse when the church rate was abolished, 1867. Some devoted parishioner, however, who wished to revive the custom, then gave an annual donation of £5, but with the death of that gentleman the custom quietly died out some forty years ago. It is interesting to note, that one of the ten musical bells which the tower of our parish church contains, the eighth, is still called the curfew bell.



## CURFEW.

## I.

Solemnly, mournfully,  
 Dealing its dole.  
 The Curfew Bell  
 Is beginning to toll.

Cover the embers,  
 And put out the light;  
 Toil comes with the morning,  
 And rest with the night.

Dark grow the windows,  
 And quenched is the fire;  
 Sound fades into silence,—  
 All footsteps retire.

No voice in the chambers,  
 No sound in the hall:  
 Sleep and oblivion  
 Reign over all.

## II.

The book is completed,  
 And closed, like the day;  
 And the hand that has written it  
 Lays it away.

Dim grow its fancies,  
 Forgotten they lie;  
 Like coals in the ashes  
 They darken and die.

Song sinks into silence,  
 The story is told,  
 The windows are darkened,  
 The hearth-stone is cold.

Darker and darker  
 The black shadows fall;  
 Sleep and oblivion  
 Reign over all.

LONGFELLOW.

## CHAPTER IV.

War—is murder.

To murder thousands takes a specious name,  
War's glorious art, and gives immortal fame.

EDWARD YOUNG.

## SAXON AND DANISH INVASIONS.

After the final departure of the Romans from Britain the country sank into a state of anarchy, and was for many years a prey to internal discord and foreign invaders. The Picts, a fierce people of the north, made continual inroads into Britain. They strengthened themselves by a league with marauders from Ireland—Scots as they were then called—whose pirate-boats were harrying the western coast of the island. In their difficulties the Britons invited the aid of the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. These Germanic tribes occupied the borderland of North Germany and Denmark. With their assistance the Picts and Scots were soon driven back and scattered to the winds in a great battle.

Seeing the deplorable and feeble state of the Britons, and being delighted with the beauty and fertility of the country to which they had come, these foreign tribes determined to settle in it themselves. So they invited over great numbers of

their countrymen and kinsmen to become sharers in their enterprise of conquering the land. After their conquest of the eastern shores of the island, they settled down in different and distinct parts of the country—the Angles in Suffolk and Norfolk, the Jutes in Kent, and the Saxons in Essex. Here the Saxons founded the Kingdom of East Seaxe or Essex, which comprised the counties of Essex, Middlesex, and part of Hertfordshire.

Practically little is known of the course of affairs during the fifth and sixth centuries. The whole period is as obscure as it is important. It was only by slow degrees, and after long and bitter struggles, that the foreign invaders drove the Britons into Wales and Cornwall. About the end of the sixth century the conquest of the bulk of Britain was complete, and seven or eight Kingdoms were founded. But it is certain that there was a crowd of smaller states, each of which had its own separate chief, and that these seven or eight stand out conspicuous among the rest.

It was not until 827 that Egbert, king of Wessex, united them into one Kingdom—the Kingdom of England—styling himself “The King of the English.”

As to the actual date of the introduction of Christianity into our island we must be contented to confess our ignorance. It is, however, an historical fact, that in the year 597 Pope Gregory,

who was surnamed the Great, sent Augustine, a Roman abbot of distinguished piety, to convert the heathen English. When St. Augustine was consecrated as Archbishop of the English nation he ordained Mellitus as Bishop of London, and sent him to preach the Gospel to the East Saxons in 604. At that time Sebert was King of Essex, and being converted from idolatry to the faith of Christ, thus became the first Christian King of Essex.

The Saxons were not left in peace to enjoy the country they had conquered. They were themselves disturbed by the Danes, or Northmen, who came from Denmark and Scandinavia. These were terrible foes, and a continual source of trouble to the land. For a long time these sea-kings of the North had been hovering off the English coast, with a view to getting possession of the country. They seemed invincible in arms, driving all before them, and spreading dread and destruction around the coast which they haunted. As the coast of Essex lay particularly open to the invasions of these pirates, they occasionally swooped down on this part of Essex also, making havoc of everything, burning churches and laying waste the fields with barbarous cruelty.

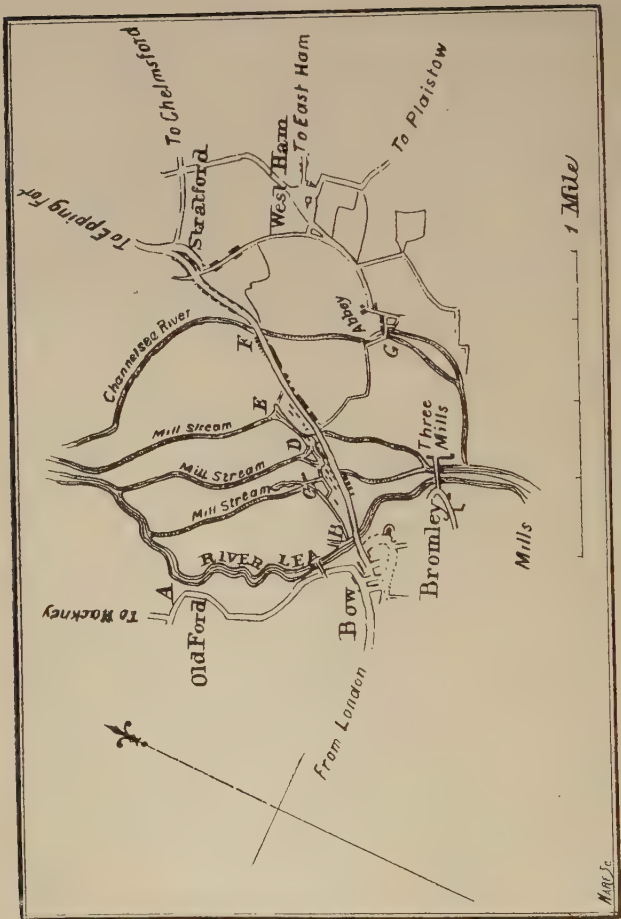
It was on occasion of one of these terrible inroads of the Danes, in the year 895, that King Alfred the Great undertook a work which has been of immense benefit to this district. The Danes had sailed with their ships up the river Lea to a place about



twenty miles above London, either Ware or Hertford, where they constructed a fortress and wintered. The citizens of London and others who attacked them were repulsed with great loss. During the following harvest, however, Alfred, with his army, encamped in the neighbourhood of London to protect the inhabitants while they reaped their corn. Riding one day on the banks of the river Lea he conceived the idea of altering the channel of the river, so as to cut off the retreat of the enemy.

A learned English antiquarian tells us that Alfred opened the mouth of the river and divided it into three parts, thus laying the stream so low as to strand the ships of the Danes. There are near Stratford numerous canals or watercourses which were undoubtedly made by King Alfred. The name of Channelsea river, given to one of the branches of the river Lea, points to this origin.

Before the completion of the work the Danes, perceiving the perilous position in which they were placed, abandoned their quarters and marched westward. The Danish ships were taken possession of by the Londoners, who destroyed whatever spoil they were unable to carry off. A few years ago there were unearthed in the Lea marsh, near Tottenham, the remains of a vessel, which was believed to be one of the abandoned Danish ships. It was found lying bottom upwards under six feet of silt and sand and clay.



After having reigned twenty-nine years and six months, Alfred died in the year 901, aged fifty-two, leaving his country in the enjoyment of comparative peace. Greater and better earned glory

has never been attached to the memory of any chieftain than that which encircles the name of Alfred. His wise and energetic rule has made his name dear to all generations of Englishmen as that of their best and greatest King.

During the following reigns the terrible wars that raged between the Anglo-Saxon and Danish races, swept at times also over this part of the country. We know hardly anything of the course of affairs relating to this district, but we may be sure, that many of the events recorded in history must have had great influence on its local condition.



## CHAPTER V.

Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
And simple faith than Norman blood.

TENNYSON.

## NORMAN OCCUPATION.

In the time of Edward the Confessor (1042—1066) the two parishes of East and West Ham still went by one common name—"Ham." Of the owners of the land, its extent and population, we have special information preserved in Domesday book. This book is one of the most valuable records of England. It was framed by order of William the Conqueror, and contains a survey of the country, the extent and nature of each estate, the names, numbers, and condition of its inhabitants, as well as its value and the sums due from it to the Crown.

The book was originally kept in the cathedral of Winchester, in a chapel called "*domus Dei*," which means "House of God." From this circumstance it is supposed to have derived its name, "*domus Dei*" being corrupted into "*Domesday*." But it is more probable that its name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word, "*Domes Daeg*"—"Day of Judgment"—as it was the final authority on all matters on which it had to be referred to.

There could be no appeal from it, as there is no appeal from the sentence at the Day of Judgment. From Winchester the book was transferred to the Chapter House at Westminster, but it is now carefully preserved in the Public Record Office, London.

With regard to the ancient tenure of lands, the authority of Domesday Book is supreme. From



MAP OF OLD HAM.

it we learn that in the reign of Edward the Confessor this district of Ham belonged to two Saxon freemen, Alestan and Leured. The Abbey of Westminster held, as has already been stated (Chapter 2) a third much smaller estate, and Edwin, a free priest, also possessed a small portion of land, with two cottages attached to it. For this priest there was, doubtless, a church or chapel, and it is quite possible that part of that curious old parish church of East Ham may have existed even at that date.

The manor of Leured seems to have been situate to the east and north side of Ham, in what is now called East Ham, and about Forest Gate. It contained from 800 to 1,000 acres of arable, 50 acres of meadow, and woodland sufficient to afford pannage for 700 hogs. Pannage is an ancient right for turning hogs into the woods for their maintenance upon acorns and beech-mast. The annual value of the manor was £10.

The woodland was valued not for its use for hunting or for firing or building, but rather for the acorns and mast it yielded for the swine which then fed within it. At any rate Essex woodland seems to have been valued by the swine it could feed. As the woodland of East Ham was reckoned to be seven times as extensive as that of West Ham, the forest must at that time have reached down to it.

The Manor of Alestan occupied the western side of Ham, now called West Ham. It comprised

about 1,040 acres of arable, 60 acres of meadow, and woodland sufficient for 100 hogs. Its annual value was £16. There were also nine mills, both water and wind-mills. These mills indicate the position of this estate to have occupied the western side of Ham, where the Lea and its various branches afforded them water power.

The picture represents one of the wind-mills, which stood in the Stratford marshes, near the site



OLD MILL NEAR STRATFORD.



now occupied by Messrs. Jenson and Nicholson. It was struck by lightning about the year 1830 and, so wrecked, it remained for many years a very picturesque object. The base was protected by an enclosure of bricks, which was sometimes used for stores, and even occasionally as a residence for the Miller.

It is interesting to notice how often mills are entered in Domesday Book. The most remarkable group of mills in Essex was at West Ham. The right of the Lords of the Manor to the grinding of all their corn at their own mills made the possession of them of considerable value. The mills still known as the Temple Mills are said to have anciently belonged to the Knights Templars.

As a census of the population the Domesday Book is of little value, but it may fairly be assumed that in 1086, when the survey was completed, there would be an agricultural population of no less than 300 or 400 persons or heads of families in this district. The total number of the entire population of Essex, registered in that wonderful Survey book, is 14,500, without wives and children.

We have no knowledge who the Saxon proprietors, Alestan and Leured, were, and what became of them. They disappeared amongst the convulsions and changes which attended the conquest of England by the ferocious Normans, an event which reduced the Saxons to complete subjection and poverty. Their goods, their lands, and

their homes were seized by the Normans, life only being left them, which the conquerers considered a sufficient boon.

Ancient and honourable families were reduced to beggary. The Saxon Thane, who was a person of dignity and a large landed proprietor, was swept from the country. Henceforth we read only of Counts and Earls, of Barons, Esquires, and Vassals, terms connected with the grinding feudal system, and the glittering but cruel age of chivalry. The meanest Norman rose to wealth and power; even the poorest soldier found his part in the spoil and became master in the house of the vanquished Saxon. It seems to have been William's policy to root out the ancient nobility and to degrade the native inhabitants of the humbler classes to the rank of miserable slaves. The soul of the common people appeared completely crushed.

There is no county, perhaps, that bears more clearly than Essex the imprint of the Norman conquest. The Saxon element, however, has long since risen again to the surface, and has absorbed the conquerors. If we take up Domesday Book and look through its register, we find scarcely one of the Norman names recorded among the present possessors of the soil in Essex.

The only trace of the Normans now to be found in this county is in the ruined walls of their large impregnable castles, which they built for their own security, and in the arched windows of the churches which they erected.

## CHAPTER VI.

All that in this world is great and gay  
Doth as a vapour vanish and decay.

SPENSER.

## WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR AND HIS BARONS.

It was after the battle of Hastings (1066) that William the Conqueror retired to the Abbey of Barking, which was at that time a place of great repute and splendour. It is instructive to think of the Conqueror reposing under the protection of the Sanctuary and invoking the hospitality and shelter of the Lady Superior. There he resided while the fortress was being built in the heart of the City, which afterwards grew into the Tower of London. That fortress was reared not only for his residence, but also to guard against and to curb the high spirits of the citizens of the proud and populous City.

During the time that William remained at the Abbey most of the Saxon chiefs came from the north of England to bow to him. Here also a council of war was occasionally held to discuss the means of promptly completing the conquest of England. Seven years, however, elapsed before the conquest was completed and William saw his

boldest wishes attained in the most brilliant manner. He reigned with great severity. His great object was to bring the whole of England into direct submission to his power, a process in which he thoroughly succeeded, and which first made England that consolidated and indivisible kingdom which it has ever since remained.

Now of course the powerful Barons, who had come over with him from Normandy, looked for a share of the spoil for having aided him in subduing the land. Thus the landed property was wrested from its native holders and bestowed on foreign chieftains.

To Robert Gernon, one of the most influential of these Barons, he gave in this district the whole of Leured's manor in East Ham and Forest Gate, and one half of the estate which had belonged to the Saxon Alestan. The other half of this estate became the share of Ralph Peverel, whose chief seat was at Hatfield Peverel, near Witham, Essex. Some obscurity rests upon its later history, but it seems finally to have fallen into the hands of the Crown.

Progress was not the ordinary result of the Norman occupation in this part of the country, but we find it recorded in Domesday Book that during the twenty years, until the survey was completed (1086), the parish of "Ham" had much increased both in value and population.

In the beginning of the twelfth century the great Lordship or Barony of Ham passed from the possession of Robert Gernon to that of William de Montfichet, in whose family it remained for several generations. The name of Robert Gernon is surrounded by errors. It has been stated, that his son took the name of Montfichet, but it is now known, that the house of Montfichet was quite distinct from that of Gernon, whose estates, however, it obtained during the reign of Henry I., 1106-1135.

It was William de Montfichet who built the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne, locally called West Ham Abbey. As he endowed the Abbey with all his property in Ham, it is very probable that he then abandoned the ancient Saxon manor and established himself at Stansted, in Essex. Here he erected a mighty castle, which then became the chief seat of that great Norman family.

No records exist concerning the condition of East and West Ham beyond what we have gathered from the afore-mentioned entries in Domesday Book, until the early part of the twelfth century. At that time two circumstances occurred, which probably have affected their condition more than any event, the knowledge of which has come down to us.

## THE NORMAN BARON.

In his chamber, weak and dying,  
 Was the Norman baron lying;  
 Loud, without, the tempest thundered,  
 And the castle-turret shook.

In this fight was Death the gainer,  
 Spite of vassal and retainer  
 And the lands his sires had plundered,  
 Written in the Domesday book.

By his bed a monk was seated,  
 Who in humble voice repeated  
 Many a prayer and pater-noster,  
 From his missal on his knee:

And amid the tempest pealing,  
 Sounds of bell came faintly stealing,  
 Bells, that from the neighbouring Kloster (convent)  
 Rang for the Nativity.

In the hall the serf and vassal  
 Held that night their Christmas wassail;  
 Many a carol, old and saintly,  
 Sang the minstrels and the waits.

And so loud these Saxon gleemen  
 Sang to slaves the songs of freemen,  
 That the storm was heard but faintly,  
 Knocking at the castle-gates.

Till at length the lays they chanted  
 Reached the chamber terror-haunted,  
 Where the monk, with accents holy,  
 Whispered at the baron's ear.

Tears upon his eyelids glistened  
 As he paused awhile and listened,  
 And the dying baron slowly  
 Turned his weary head to hear.

“Wassail for the kingly stranger  
 Born and cradled in a manger!  
 King like David, priest like Aaron,  
 Christ is born to set us free!”

And the lightning showed the sainted  
 Figures on the casement painted,  
 And exclaimed the shuddering baron,  
 “Miserere • Domine!”

In that hour of deep contrition  
 He beheld, with clearer vision,  
 Through all outward show and fashion,  
 Justice, the Avenger, rise.

All the pomp of earth had vanished,  
 Falsehood and deceit were banished,  
 Reason spake more loud than passion,  
 And the truth wore no disguise.

Every vassal of his banner,  
 Every serf born to his manor,  
 All those wronged and wretched creatures,  
 By his hand were freed again.

And as on the sacred missal  
 He recorded their dismissal,  
 Death relaxed his iron features,  
 And the monk replied “Amen!”

Many centuries have been numbered  
 Since in death the baron slumbered  
 By the convent’s sculptured portal,  
 Mingling with the common dust.

But the good deed, through the ages,  
 Living in historic pages,  
 Brighter grows and gleams immortal,  
 Unconsumed by moth or rust.

LONGFELLOW.



## CHAPTER VII.

She was good, she was fair;  
 None, none on earth above her.  
 S. ROGERS.

## QUEEN MAUD AND BOW BRIDGE.

Of the two circumstances referred to in the preceding chapter the first in date and importance was the erection of the Bow and Channelsea bridges, with the construction of the causeway between them, by Matilda, better known as Maud (Queen of Henry I., 1099-1135). The other was the foundation of the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne or West Ham Abbey by William de Montfichet.

The old Roman road from London into Essex passed in ancient days by Old Ford about a mile to the north of the present highway, through a tidal river—the Lea—and then across the often flooded marshes of Leyton to Stratford. It appears that the way by “the Old Ford” was often impassable and exceedingly dangerous. On one occasion Queen Maud herself nearly lost her life in crossing it.

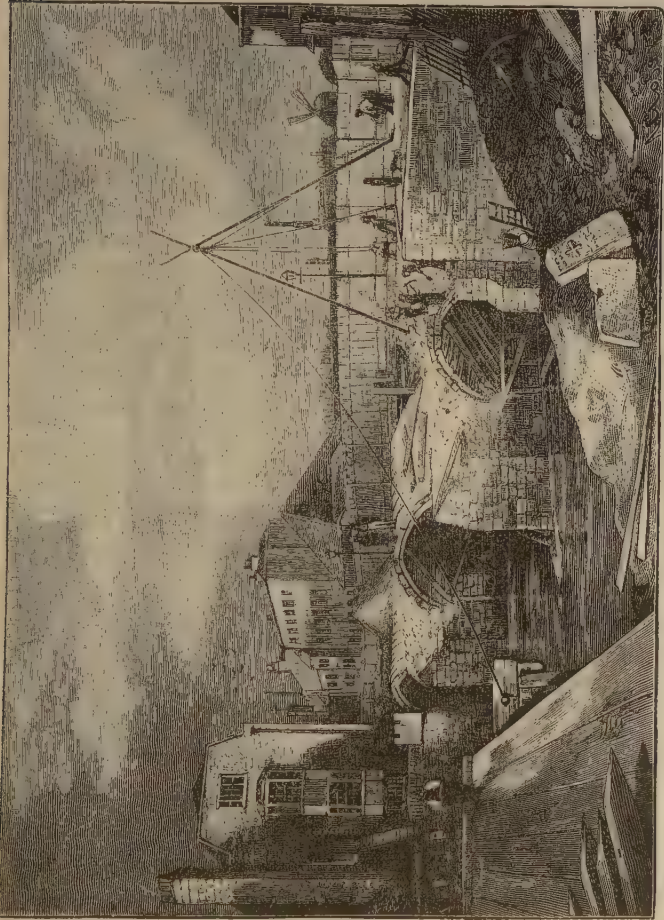
It is related by the old historians that, about the beginning of the twelfth century, “the good

Queen Maud with her attendants, when crossing on horseback into Essex by the Old Ford, was well washed in the water and not without danger of drowning." Stow, 'an eminent English antiquarian of the sixteenth century, also records "that Queen Maud, when she saw the way to be dangerous for them that travelled by the Old Ford over the river Lea—for she herself had been well washed in the water—caused two stone bridges to be built in a place one mile distant from the Old Ford." One of these bridges was situated at the head of the town of Stratford, now called Bow, "because the bridge was arched like a bow, a rare piece of work, the like of which had never been seen in England before."

The other bridge was over a channel of the river Lea, called Channelsea, upon which the Abbey Mills are situated at about half a mile below. It was probably also of stone and arched like a bow—at any rate the similarity of the architecture leads to that supposition. As Barking Abbey was not only under Queen Maud's special patronage but was also her occasional residence, it is highly probable that she had personal experience of the road and the dangerous passage across the Lea, and so caused the bridges to be made.

"Queen Maud was"—says an old chronicler—"the very mirror of piety, knowledge and princely bounty, passionately fond of music, of which she

was a liberal patroness. Such was her humility that, when her brother David, King of Scotland, came to visit her, he found her engaged in washing the feet of some lepers. Her piety was so great



Old Bow Bridge

that it was her custom to walk every day in Lent from her Palace to Church, barefooted and barelegged, wearing a garment of hair. She would also lie for days and nights in prayer and in penance before the shrine."

Tradition has constantly affirmed that the bridge at Bow was the first bridge built in England with a stone arch. It certainly was erected sixty years before the first bridge over the Thames was commenced, about 1176, fifty-eight years after Queen Maud's death. Its original width was only 13 feet 6 inches.

Queen Maud turned the old Roman road with a considerable curve to the southward from the Old Ford to where it is now, and also raised the causeway between the two bridges "so that persons might well and securely pass it." A causeway is a raised road across a low or wet place, and is usually paved with cobbles and pebbles. It is supposed that the new road joined the old Roman road somewhere opposite "the Pigeons Hotel" in the Romford Road.

At Stratford the ancient highway divided into two branches. One way led through the forest to the "Ford in the wood," where Woodford Bridge is now, while the other, tending more to the east, passed through Forest Gate, and crossing the Roding at Ilford led further on to Romford, etc.

About this time two hamlets, both called Stratford, sprang into existence, namely Stratford-atte-Bow, at the Middlesex end of the causeway, and Stratford Langthorne, called also Stratford-le-Bow, forming part of West Ham, on the Essex side of the bridge.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Doing good is the only certainly happy action of man's life.—SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

## BOW BRIDGE.

Good Queen Maud did not leave her charitable work incomplete, for she not only built the aforementioned two bridges and raised the causeway between them, but she also endowed them. For this purpose she bought certain manors and a water mill, called "Wiggen's Mill," which stood on the site of the present Abbey Mills, for their perpetual maintenance and repair. Having thus endowed the bridges and the causeway between them, she entrusted the care of them to the Abbess and Convent of Barking, which was at that time the nearest religious house. She was evidently afraid that, if the endowment were committed to secular persons, the trustees or their heirs might prove unfaithful to their trust.

The Abbess did not long retain this charge, for as soon as the Abbey of Stratford was founded (1135) by William de Montfichet, she transferred it together with the lands, rents, meadow and mill attached to it, to the Abbot of Stratford, "who was desirous to purchase the same, because they were

near his Abbey." The Abbot now undertook to repair the bridges and the causeway, and to pay the Abbess of Barking a yearly rent of four marks, equal to £2 13s. 4d. of our money.

For some length of time he continued to fulfil these conditions. In 1303 an inquisition was sworn, which brought to light, that in the reign of Henry III. (1216-72) the Abbot had delegated the charge of keeping the bridge in repair to a bridgemaster, who levied a regular toll. For every cart carrying corn, wood or coal, etc., he received one penny; for one carrying teasel (the fuller's thistle used for dressing cloth) two pence; and for carrying a dead Jew, eight pence.

Numerous complaints were made respecting the bad repair of the bridge. The Abbot persistently neglected his duty and wanted to throw the charge again upon the Abbess of Barking. A dispute arose between the two houses and after many years of litigation the Abbot ultimately (1315) acknowledged his liability and bound himself and his successors "to repair and maintain the Bow and Channelsea bridges and the causeway between them." For this agreement the Abbess paid the Abbot the sum of £200 in silver.

From this period until the suppression of the Abbey by King Henry VIII., in 1538, we do not find that any attempt was made to throw off the responsi-



bility. King Henry granted the lands and the site of the Abbey to Sir Peter Meautas, "who held them charged for the repair of the bridges and the highway." His heirs sold the lands to various persons, who, as the successors of the Abbot, were liable to perform the necessary repairs.

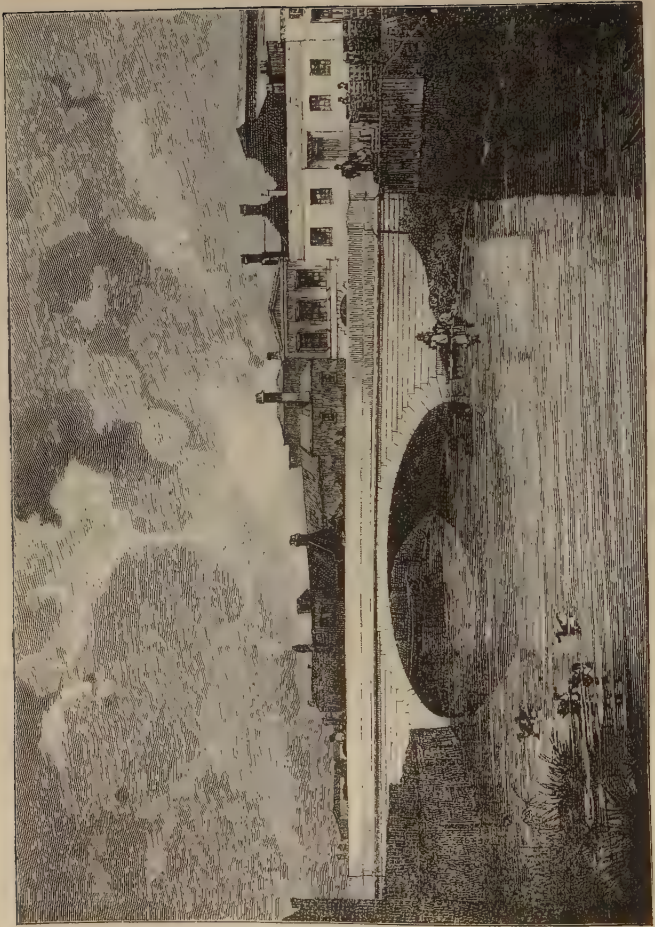
However, we find that in the seventeenth century the Abbey landowners tried to play the same game as the Abbot had formerly done, by repudiating the charge. Much litigation ensued, until the matter was finally settled in 1691, in the King's Bench. The Court was of opinion "that all the lands of the Abbot were liable to the repair of the bridges and the highway between them, and directed the jury accordingly." At this date the total rental of the Abbey lands had increased to £15,100.

The Abbey land commissioners, who had been empowered to make an assessment on the Abbey lands for defraying the expenses of keeping the bridges and causeway in repair, were in 1876 by Act of Parliament, on the payment of £1,000 to the Local Board of West Ham, relieved from all obligations to maintain the bridges and causeway. Thereupon the Abbey land rate ceased to be raised. In 1886 West Ham was made a municipal borough and the management of the bridges and the causeway has since been vested in the Corporation.

In course of time the bridges built by Queen Maud were found much too narrow for such an important thoroughfare, and occasioned considerable inconvenience and danger to those that used them. Railroads had not yet diverted any portion of the traffic. The number of travellers had considerably increased. Moreover, several stage-coaches from the Eastern Counties had been started in addition to the local omnibuses, besides conveyances of all sorts. To estimate their number it must be borne in mind that many merchants and bankers residing in East and West Ham and the neighbouring parishes kept their own carriages. Accidents were frequent and the people used to say that the apothecary's shop, near the bridge, derived its principal support from them. The ascent also was so steep that occasionally the horses dropped in drawing their heavy loads up the bridge.

In 1835 it was discovered that the bridge was in such a dilapidated state that it was necessary to remove it altogether. During this operation the architects found that of the original structure but little remained.

From the numerous repairs and additions that had been made, it presented a patched appearance, nor was there any means of ascertaining the number of arches of which the bridge originally consisted. This venerable and time-worn structure had during the lapse of centuries, no doubt, under-



NEW BOW BRIDGE.  
Opened 1839 Demolished 1905.

gone many alterations. In its place was built a new bridge of one oblate arch, which was completed at a cost of £12,000 and declared open for traffic in 1839. In 1905 this handsome bridge was demolished and an iron structure of greater width was erected.

Before leaving the subject of Bow Bridge it is worthy of mention that a chapel, dedicated to St. Katharine, is said to have stood upon it. By whom it was built or when taken down is not known. It was the custom of our forefathers to erect religious houses on bridges. They were generally dedicated to the Saint who was supposed to protect those who navigated the river.

It is more than probable that a chapel in olden times was attached to Bow Bridge, when we consider the time of its erection and the circumstances which led to its foundation. Moreover, we have undoubted evidence of the existence of such a chapel. In Sir William Dugdale's work on "Embanking and Draining," it is stated that in the thirty-third year of King Henry VI. (1454) a commission was appointed "to view and repair the river between St. Katharine's Chapel upon Bow Bridge in the parish of West Ham unto East Tilbury."



## CHAPTER IX.

Cloister thee in some religious house,  
Our holy lives must win a new world's crown.

SHAKESPEARE.

## WEST HAM ABBEY.

The other circumstance referred to (Ch. VI.), which also greatly affected this district, is the foundation of the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne—locally known as West Ham Abbey—by William de Montfichet in 1135. This ancient monastery stood in the marshes on a branch of the Lea, the Channelsea river, which was one of the artificial channels cut by Alfred the Great.

Nearly the whole site is now covered with factories and warehouses. It requires a vigorous effort of the imagination to realise the fact that busy workmen now pursue their daily labours on the spot where once stood in tranquil solitude a monastery dedicated to the religious quiet of hooded monks, whose chants trembled and echoed through the lofty arches of its cloisters. Here the monks dwelt in absolute seclusion from the world, amidst the orchards and gardens, and passed their lives in devotional exercises and the worship of God. They



CISTERCIAN MONK.

were men of another age, living in a state of society very different from that of the present generation with its bustle and excitement.

The century which followed the Norman conquest witnessed an outburst of architectural energy, which covered the land with castles, churches and

monasteries. Few nations have been more distinguished than the Normans by their taste for magnificent buildings. A Norman noble of that period thought that his estate lacked its chief ornament, if he failed to build a church or plant a colony of monks on some corner of his extensive manor. Hence we find that a great number of Abbeys and religious houses were founded and richly endowed by Norman nobles.

In their ignorance and superstition the men of that iron age were taught to believe that a life of rapine and luxury could be atoned for by good works and almsdeeds. What those lives were, of which they sought to expiate the guilt, some faint idea may be gained when we reflect upon the forcible manner in which the ferocious Normans held possession of the soil. Armed in their strongholds, with which the country was studded, they dwelt as conquerors amongst a hostile population, with which they were constantly in collision.

But, while many of the religious houses were founded by profligate and vicious persons, it cannot be denied that many were also erected and endowed by deeply religious men, who were actuated wholly and solely by the highest motives. Among this latter class we may include William de Montfichet.

The West Ham Abbey was founded for brethren of the Cistercian order, and like all Cistercian monas-



teries was dedicated to "the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saints." It was richly endowed by its founder and other benefactors, and possessed in the days of its splendour 1,500 acres of land in this district alone, besides many manors and estates both in Essex and in other counties. No wonder that Abbeyes grew wealthy, when the Church of Rome enforced the doctrine that whatever was given to them was consecrated to God and good for the soul of the donor.

The Cistercian monks were much devoted to agriculture and horticulture. Both flourished under their care, and it is more than probable, that many rare fruits and vegetables, now known in this country, were imported by them from the south of France where the original order of the Cistercians was first established.

We are told that they were temperate and simple in their habits, and that their rule of life was very severe. They lay on straw beds in their tunics and cowls; they rose at midnight and sang praises to God till break of day; they spent their day in labour, meditation and prayer, and in all their exercises observed a strict and continual silence.

It is difficult for us now to realise what a busy hive of industry a great monastery like that of West Ham really was. Everything that was eaten, drunk or used by the inmates was produced on the

spot. The monks grew their own corn on their own land, and ground it in their own mills. Their clothes were made from the wool of their own sheep, of which they are known to have possessed at least 800 in this immediate neighbourhood. They had their own tailors and shoemakers, carpenters and blacksmiths, butchers and bakers. They also had their own bees, their own vineyards and fishponds.

As the Abbey stood low among the marshes it was liable to frequent inundations from the river. In the fourteenth century a terrible calamity overtook the monks of the Abbey. They were actually routed by the floods and compelled to fly to their property at Great Burstead, near Billericay. There they remained until Richard II. took the Abbey under his protection and made extensive repairs, alterations and additions to it. From that time the Abbey appears to have gone on prosperously.



## CHAPTER X.

O, how blest are ye whose toils are ended!

Who, through death, have unto God ascended!

LONGFELLOW (translated from the German).

### WEST HAM ABBEY (*continued*).

Unfortunately the records of West Ham Abbey have not been preserved, or at any rate not yet discovered, so that but little is known respecting the history of this religious house. It bore a high character, and by the gifts of pious people it grew enormously in wealth. Though un-mitred, one of its Abbots was twelve times summoned to attend Parliament or Convocations of the Clergy.

In 1267 it had the honour of becoming for a while the residence of Henry III. and the scene of important historical transactions. The King was at war with the Barons, who had revolted against him, because he had cancelled the great Charter of liberty, which they had extorted from King John in 1216. The people generally were also much exasperated, as he had suffered the Pope to appoint an Archbishop of Canterbury and to collect tithes in England.

A revolt broke out in London, which was one of the last acts of the struggle between the King

and his people. To quell this dangerous insurrection the King prepared to lay siege to London in the summer of 1267. He encamped with his army at Stratford and took his temporary abode in the Abbey of "the White Monks."

Thither came unto him the Pope's legate, Ottoboni, who had been besieged in the Tower of London, but had with considerable difficulty escaped by a postern on the side next to the river. Assuming in the name of the Pope full legislative power in England, Ottoboni had come for the express purpose of arranging terms of peace between the King and his rebellious barons. He joined the King at the Abbey. The circumstance that "for straitness of lodging the King's horses and mules were set within the cloisters of the Abbey," would imply that stabling accommodation was at that time somewhat limited at Stratford.

At a later date—1411 and 1412—King Henry IV. was several times entertained at West Ham Abbey. We are also told that King Edward IV. was nobly entertained at the Abbey in 1467, and in the following year he made the Abbot and Convent by deed an annual gift of two casks of wine for the celebration of masses. This gift was subsequently changed to an allowance in money.

Even Ladies of rank and distinction occasionally dwelt within the precincts of the Abbey. That women, however honourable, were allowed to reside

there, shows that the former regulations and rules of strict discipline were greatly relaxed. Among the Ladies we find the names of Lady Margaret de Vere and the unfortunate Countess of Salisbury, a niece of Edward IV. This aged, venerable and high-spirited woman, who resided here at the time of the dissolution, was 70 years old, when King Henry caused her to be beheaded on the most frivolous pretences.

After having been kept imprisoned in the Tower of London for two years, she was, in 1541, dragged to the scaffold, and one of the most frightful scenes in English history took place. When told by the executioners to lay her head on the block, she refused, saying "No, so should traitors do; my head never committed treason; if you will have it, you must take it as you can." The executioners strove to detain her, but she ran swiftly round the scaffold, tossing her head from side to side, while the executioners struck at her with their axes. At last, with her grey hairs all dabbled in blood, she was held forcibly to the block and an end put to her misery.

It was a reign of terror. The noblest heads rolled on the block. Even royal blood could not save Lady Salisbury.

Not only did the great and nobles of the land occasionally resort to the Abbey and reside there, but many of them were also anxious to procure a resting

place within its church. Monasteries were generally the places of interment for the great lords and kings. It was not an unnatural weakness to think that some advantage might be derived from lying in holy places and amongst holy persons. Moreover this superstition was fomented by the Church with the greatest industry and art.

John de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Essex, and High Constable of England, desired to be buried in the Abbey of West Ham. He died in 1335, an invalid, at Kirkby Thore, in Westmoreland, whence his body was brought for burial to the Abbey. His monument, if it ever existed, has totally disappeared, nor do we know what was the connexion between the Abbey and the great Baron.



## CHAPTER XI.

All authority is founded in grace.

JOHN WYCLIF.

WEST HAM ABBEY (*continued*).

It has already been mentioned that the Abbey of West Ham was richly endowed by its founder, William de Montfichet, and that after his death the stream of benefactions still kept flowing on. It was not until the time of the struggle between the houses of York and Lancaster, which devastated the kingdom, that the gifts to the Abbey became few and unimportant, and gradually ceased altogether. Moreover the influence of the early Reformers had more or less weaned the national mind from dependence on Monastic orders.

As early as 1365 John Wyclif, "the Morning Star of the Reformation," as he was styled, had commenced his open controversy with the clergy and mendicant friars, and taught doctrines which were entirely opposed to those of the Church of Rome. These reformed opinions spread so rapidly, that shortly after his death (1384) his followers, under the name of the Lollards, were computed at more than half the people of England, numbering among their ranks some of the most powerful nobles.

Although the Bishops were empowered to suppress this "heresy," and to persecute the Lollards to death, the people sympathized with the Reformers and made their voices heard through their representatives in Parliament. Upon the accession of Henry IV. (1399) Parliament presented a petition "that temporal lands, devoutly given but disordinately spent by spiritual persons, should be seized into the King's hand."

The result of this movement was the suppression of 110 priories, whose revenues were given to the Crown. Although the downfall of the Abbeys, already tottering, was for a time averted, yet a severe blow had been struck at the system and influence of monastic life.

In the 12th, 13th and 14th centuries the monasteries were unquestionably shining lights, compared to the atmosphere by which they were surrounded. They were centres of civilisation and refinement, and seats of learning and literature. Many valuable books and national records were preserved in their libraries, which indeed were the only places where they could safely have been lodged in those turbulent times.

Nor ought we to forget that we owe to those pious monks a great debt of gratitude, for it is through them mostly, that the Holy Scriptures have been handed down to us. They spent years of



patient labour in making exact copies of the Word of God and ornamenting them with affectionate care and marvellous skill. The beauty of design, the brilliancy of the colouring and the exquisite neatness



MONKS COPYING HOLY SCRIPTURES.

of every stroke, testify to a reverential and loving interest in Holy Writ, which may well be an example to ourselves.

Leland, an eminent antiquarian of the 16th century, informs us that he found in the library of the West Ham Abbey almost all the works of Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. This learned divine wrote commentaries on most of the books of Holy Scripture, and to him we also owe the first division of the Old and New Testament into chapters, which has been adopted ever since.

Nor were the monasteries useless in other respects. They were the Hospitals for the sick and needy, many of whom were relieved by them. They also afforded lodging and entertainment to travellers, when there was no inn. At various times they received visitors, for whom they had to provide, and large buildings were necessary to meet their requirements.

But the monastic orders made no progress. In the 15th and 16th centuries their position relative to the world was much changed, and gradually their usefulness began to wane. Whilst art and science and commerce were making constant progress among the lay population, and the doctrines and precepts of Holy Scripture became known, the monks still clung to their mediæval prejudices.

Many of the religious houses became the hiding places of indolence, even of crime and imposture. False miracles disgraced their shrines, idleness and vice their halls and cloisters. Worldliness and want of discipline had their natural consequences. However, in common fairness and candour it must be admitted that, though there were scandalous brethren, the monks as a class were neither vicious nor unchaste, and there was rarely, very rarely, a wicked abbot or prior. Nay, as a rule, the Abbots were men of strict honour and prudence.

## CHAPTER XII.

They that stand high have many blasts to shake them,  
And if they fall, they dash themselves to pieces.

SHAKESPEARE.

### DISSOLUTION OF WEST HAM ABBEY.

One of the most remarkable events during the reign of Henry VIII. was the suppression of all the monastic houses throughout the Kingdom. The first steps were taken in 1535. Visitors were sent under the direction of Thomas Cromwell, Grand Chamberlain of the King, to enquire into their condition. The men performed the work with indecent haste. Upon obviously insufficient evidence they brought against the monks charges of the foulest and most revolting crimes.

A universal cry of horror arose throughout the country at the revelations resulting from the enquiry, and an order was issued in 1536 for the suppression of all monasteries, whose income was less than £200 a year. Two years after, Cromwell devoted his attention to the greater monasteries, which soon shared the fate of the smaller establishments. The whole number of monasteries sup-

pressed amounted to 675, and the total revenue accruing to the Crown by the confiscation was roughly estimated at over £140,000 per annum.

Public opinion, as we now call it, had greatly seconded the movement for the abolition of the Abbeys and withdrawn the sympathies of the people from their inmates. The great principles of the Reformation had also for many years been gaining a strong hold on men's minds. It was generally recognised that, as spiritual agencies, the monasteries had outlived their days of usefulness and ceased to fulfil the object of their institution.

Although the charges of misconduct brought against them were undoubtedly grossly exaggerated, there is no ground for believing them to be wholly untrue. About one-third of all the religious houses were fairly and decently conducted; some were totally blameless, but were nevertheless suppressed. The innocent had to suffer with the guilty.

The immediate cause of their downfall was their accumulated wealth, with which Cromwell tempted the covetousness of Henry. The great shame and scandal was, that it was a mere act of robbery, and that the greater part of the vast revenues of the monastic houses was squandered with reckless prodigality among Henry's courtiers.

A small portion only was used for the foundation of new episcopal sees, grammar schools and

other public purposes. Pensions were also given to most of the inmates of the suppressed monasteries, but they were very small and just enough for their maintenance.

Cromwell himself received a considerable share of the confiscated lands, with which he endowed his own Earldom of Essex. But the honours and wealth heaped upon him raised him up many powerful enemies. Cromwell had few friends. He was resolute and unscrupulous. He advanced too fast, till he stood absolutely alone, and when he had lost the Royal favour, he had nothing on which to fall back.

At last “he fell like lightning”—says the historian Froude —“while on the very pinnacle of his power.” He was arrested on the 10th of June, 1540, on the charge of treason, heresy, oppression, bribery and extortion, and beheaded on Tower Hill, on the 28th July following. His head was chopped off by a clumsy executioner in a manner more than usually revolting.

It was in 1538, that West Ham Abbey, after an existence of four centuries, was resigned into the hands of Henry VIII. The wealth of this house was very considerable and at the time of its dissolution its yearly income was estimated at £652. The deed of surrender which is still extant in the “Public Record Office” in London, was executed in the Chapter House of the Abbey on the 18th

March in the above-named year. It was signed by William Huddleston, the last of its Abbots, the Chanter, the Sacrist and eleven monks.

On that day many hearts must have been full of deep emotion. It could not have been without feelings of pain and sorrow, that each monk approached the table and signed away his own familiar home and its sacred precincts to the profanation of lay proprietors—its church, its cloisters, its chapter house to desecration;—to give up his share in its quiet luxuries, its farm, its manors, and the garden he had tended. Instead of remaining a member of a wealthy community he was now to go forth a needy man into a world from which he had long been estranged.

However much we may concur in the judgment as to the propriety of the suppression of the Abbey, it is impossible not to feel pity for some of the individuals. Many of them must have been old and infirm, and utterly unfit from either habit or taste to battle with the stream of life. To such the change must have cost great effort.

The Abbot and Convent having surrendered their house, King Henry granted the Abbey with all its estates to Sir Peter Meautas and Johanna his wife “for their true and faithful service.”

After their ejection the monks are said to have been permitted to retire to a mansion at Plaistow,

part of their former possessions, and there to have resided in community. The house has disappeared, but part of the garden walls remain to the present day in the nursery gardens in High Street. An adjacent gateway of a somewhat later date has only within the last fifty years been removed. Of this mention will be made in a subsequent chapter relating to Plaistow.



## CHAPTER XIII.

The cloud capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
 The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
 Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve  
 And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
 Leave not a rack behind.

SHAKESPEARE.

## REMAINS OF WEST HAM ABBEY.

Not one stone upon another remains to tell the tale or mark the outline of this once noble house of prayer. The foundations were dug up, and save here and there a few old stones, which have been relaid in the walls of the neighbouring buildings, it would be difficult for the most inquisitive antiquarian to discover a relic of the ancient Abbey. Even the very site of the conventual church is now unknown. The graves and monuments of the Abbots and of the great and noble ones, who there sought their resting place, are desecrated and forgotten.

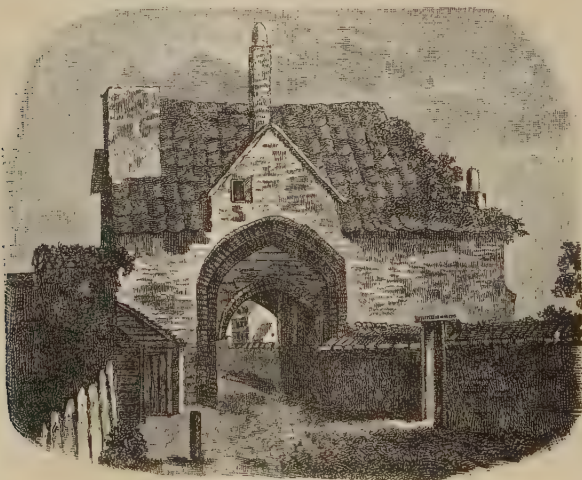
Nearly the whole site of the old Abbey is now covered with ranges of factory buildings, warehouses and yards, which make it difficult to picture that it once was a place of rest and prayer for the monks, or a quiet and pleasant retreat for Kings and nobles. The ancient "Mansion" and the





to the ground, not a trace being left. These two large, though much decayed buildings, were still in existence about fifty years ago. One of them, which had once been the residence of the unfortunate Countess of Salisbury, was then a home for Lascars, who had been brought to London as sailors, and was afterwards converted into a refuge for destitute boys.

By reference to the accompanying map we are enabled to form some idea of the various groups of buildings, which belonged to the Abbey. Starting from West Ham Parish Church along the Abbey Road we pass on our left the Leather Cloth Factory, the site of which was occupied by the parish workhouse, before the present Union house in the Leytonstone Road was established.



ABBEY GATE, 1758.

Some fifty yards beyond it stood the great "Entrance Gate" of the Abbey. It was a fine brick building with a double entrance, one for horses and vehicles, and a small one for foot passengers. The office of the monk-porter was a very important one and of considerable trust, as it was his duty to know what guests were to be admitted into the Abbey. No women were allowed to pass through it. In the south-east corner of the precincts, enclosed by a moat, was the site of the "Lodge or Moated House," occupying one acre of ground. It is very probable that this "Lodge" was the site of the manor house of Robert Gernon, the Domesday tenant, or even that of Leured, the Saxon.

The "Adam and Eve" public-house has always been considered to occupy the site of the conventual church. To the eastward of the church were the "Poor Firmary" and two gardens. Southward of the monastery was the Abbey Grange, which is said to have comprised four acres.

The Abbey Mills lay between the two branches of the Channelsea river. The accompanying picture of the mills is an accurate representation of them as they were in the year 1830, surrounded by ancient willows, which were believed to have been planted by the monks. Of these mills in their ancient condition nothing now remains. They were burnt down some forty years ago, and the present Abbey Mills were built on the old foundation.



ABBNEY MILLS, 1830.

The whole site of the Abbey comprised about sixteen acres, and was enclosed by a moat. Within its precincts was a population independent of the monks, carrying on various secular occupations. We find records of a slaughterhouse, a grange, a dove house, stables, haybarns, a bakehouse, near the mills, a farm yard and orchards.

In the kitchen of the above-mentioned public house may still be seen a flag-stone with brass studs, which seems to have affixed to it two figures beneath canopies, but the indent is almost effaced.

Some twenty years ago an old carved stone was dug up in the garden of the “Adam and Eve,” and lay for many years exposed to the weather. The design is a number of human skulls, set in separate niches. It was carved by a skilful hand, and may have been built into the wall or over the door of the Mortuary Chapel. It is in fair preservation and was presented by the Bishop of Barking to West Ham Church, where it is now placed in the North Wall of the Tower porch. There are also still extant what appear to be two cloister windows, which have within recent years been removed from their original position, and built into the outer wall of Messrs. Ingham Clark and Co.’s factory.

With the exception of these three relics every vestige of the grand old Abbey is gone. No wonder, since it was the general practice that, the moment after a religious house was dissolved and the monks had been expelled, the nobles, to whom it was given, either began at once to destroy everything, or allowed the buildings to sink into decay.



## THE WINDMILL.

Behold! a giant am I!  
Aloft here in my tower,  
With my granite jaws I devour  
The maize, and the wheat, and the rye,  
And grind them into flour.

I look down over the farms;  
In the fields of grain I see  
The harvest that is to be.  
And I fling to the air my arms,  
For I know it is all for me.

I hear the sound of flails  
Far off, from the threshing-floors  
In barns, with their open doors.  
And the wind, the wind in my sails,  
Louder and louder roars.

I stand here in my place,  
With my foot on the rock below,  
And which ever way it may blow  
I meet it face to face  
As a brave man meets his foe.

And while we wrestle and strive,  
My master, the miller, stands  
And feeds me with his hands;  
For he knows who makes him thrive,  
Who makes him lord of lands.

On Sundays I take my rest;  
Church-going bells begin  
Their low melodious din;  
I cross my arms on my breast,  
And all is peace within.

LONGFELLOW.

## CHAPTER XIV.

How beautiful they stand,  
Those ancient altars of our native land.

L. E. LONDON.

## WEST HAM PARISH CHURCH.

Among the impressive objects that happy England can show, none are more interesting and elevating than our Churches. As we enter them our hearts are moved with mingled feelings of awe and reverence. It may be generally accepted that the Parish Churches in ancient times were built by the Chief Lords of the soil, in whose respective manors they were founded.

The Parish Church of West Ham, which is dedicated to "All Saints," is of ancient date, probably of the middle of the 12th century. The exact date of its foundation is not known, but that there was a church before 1182 is evident from a charter of that date. In this charter it was stated, that Henry II. during his reign (1154-1189) confirmed the gift of the church to the Abbot and Convent by Gilbert, son of William de Montfichet, the founder of the Abbey. Soon after its appropriation to the Abbey a permanent vicarage was established by Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, with a small endowment of £39 13s. 8d.





WEST HAM CHURCH, 1854.

The church is situate in the very centre of what would formerly have been called the village, and is one of the finest and largest buildings in the east of London. Standing among the tombs of whole generations that have passed away, with many tender and pious associations clustering around it, it presents a noble and elevating aspect with the stamp of venerable antiquity upon it. It is a spacious structure of brick and stone, in mixed styles, but chiefly Perpendicular, and of grand, almost cathedral-like proportions.

The church consists of chancel, nave and aisles, divided by circular columns, which support somewhat acute pointed arches. The south aisle is

modern and of white brick, while the north aisle is of flint with stone dressings. The chancel, which is of a later date, has a north and south chapel and was divided from the church by a screen, which was taken down in the beginning of the last century.

The walls of the north chancel aisle are a fine specimen of what is known as the Tudor period; they are built of red bricks relieved by a diamond pattern of blue bricks. The old Rood tower, which gave access to the rood-loft deserves special attention.

At the western end of the church is a fine embattled tower, massive and noble in its proportions. It is built of stone in regular courses, 78 feet high, and contains a peal of ten excellent bells. The turret at the south east corner rises another ten feet above the tower battlements. From its structural character it may be fairly assumed, that the tower was erected about the latter end of the 14th century.

The quaint covered way, which leads from the church-yard wall to the south doorway of the church, is a relic of the days when West Ham was yet a village of mansions and many of the worshippers used to come to church in their carriages. Some portions of the wood-work are very old.

Originally the church was of much smaller dimensions than the present edifice. It was pro-

bably intended for the tenants of the old manor, who of course were not permitted to worship in the conventual church within the precincts of the Abbey. As may be seen by the various styles of later architecture, the building has at different times been greatly enlarged to adapt it to the requirements of the times. The oldest remnants about the present structure are the small round-headed windows—now blocked up—above the arches of the nave, which evidently are of Norman architecture, and formed part of the original church.

The interior has in course of time undergone many vigorous repairs and alterations. In 1848 the high pews were swept away and the church was reseated. A particularly striking effect was produced by the removal of the west gallery (1865), thus opening out the tower into the body of the church by the lofty and expansive arch. It seems almost incredible, that this happy architectural arrangement, the finest point in the church, should have been marred for over a century and a half by a singing gallery.

Another improvement, which was carried out at the same time, was the removal of the paint and whitewash from the stonework, as well as the plaster from the side walls of the nave. When the whitewash was removed it was found, that the whole church had been freely coloured. A picture was disclosed, which appeared to be the work of the

latter part of the 15th century. The whole subject represented the "Final doom of mankind," but as it was generally of inferior though somewhat elaborate execution, it was considered of no practical value and not worthy of preservation.

In 1892 the church was considerably beautified, the main feature being the restoration of the south aisle, and the substitution of new stone windows for the old ones with their dilapidated iron frames. At the same time two new vestries, a choir and a clergy vestry, were erected outside the south corner of the church. The space of the old vestry, which was ill adapted for its purpose, was utilised for providing a hundred new seats, so that the church at present affords accommodation for a thousand worshippers. In recent years the church has also been enriched with several fine stained glass windows.



## CHAPTER XV.

Her monuments shall last, when Egypt's fall.

E. YOUNG.

### WEST HAM CHURCH.

#### MONUMENTS AND REGISTERS.

The church contains a great number of interesting monuments, erected to the memory of former inhabitants, some of which are fine specimens of sculpture. In the north aisle of the chancel is a curious altar tomb with Gothic ornaments, of considerable antiquity, to which no name has yet been assigned with any degree of certainty. On the side exposed to view are angels bearing coats of arms, but so choked with whitewash and worn with age, that it is difficult to decipher their bearings.

Against the east wall of the same aisle is a handsome monument to the memory of Sir Thomas Foot, late Alderman and Lord Mayor of London (1650), who departed this life the 12th October, 1688, in the 96th year of his age, and of dame Elizabeth, his wife. The effigies of the deceased and his lady are life-sized and in erect position, Sir Thomas dressed in robes and his lady in an elegant dress, ornamented with lace.

Adjoining it is a monument to the memory of Mr. James Cooper, with the effigies of the deceased in white marble, as large as life, with a book open in his hand, and of his lady, standing by him. "Sir James died, aged 80, in 1743. He was a good Christian and liberal benefactor to the poor of the parish."

In the south aisle of the chancel is a handsome marble monument to Sir James Smyth, sometime Lord Mayor of London (1684), and of Elizabeth, his wife. Another monument of alabaster with columns of black marble is to the memory of William Fawcitt, gentleman, of Upton. He died in 1631, aged 60. Over the tablet are the effigies of the deceased in a recumbent position, leaning on a skull with a book in his hand, and above him, kneeling at a desk, of his widow and her second husband, William Topperfield, at whose expense the monument was erected in the year 1636.

One of the oldest is a monument in brass with the following inscription: "Thomas Staples of West Ham, deceased 1592, hath given XXs a year for ever to be distributed to the poore of the saide parish." The tablet contains the effigies of the deceased and his four wives, Anne, Margery, Denise and Alice—of course not all at one time, but in regular and lawful succession. There are several other monuments of more or less importance and interest, and, it may be added also, of more or less merit.

There are no particularly striking monuments in the church-yard, although many members of prominent local families were buried there. Among others, William Pragell, 1579, John Pragell, sen., 1590, Richard Pragell, 1618, Ursulina, wife of Captain Pragell, Governor of Berwick and Chief General under Queen Elizabeth for the North, 1616.

James Anderson, editor of the "Bee," and author of a great number of works on agricultural and industrial subjects, died 1808, aged 69.

George Edwards, the celebrated naturalist, a native of Stratford, lies also buried here. The monument erected to his memory has, unfortunately, long since disappeared. He died 1773, aged 81 years.

Here also lies one Thomas Cooper, blacksmith and farrier of Stratford, who died 1768, aged 53. His tombstone bears the following quaint inscription:—

"My sledge and hammer hath declined,  
My bellows too have lost their wind;  
My fire's extinct, my forge decay'd,  
And in the dust my vice is laid.  
My coal is spent, my iron's gone,  
My last nail driven, my work is done."

The registers of the church reach back to the year 1653, and contain many interesting entries, one of which, dated April 16th, 1689, records the following: "Peter Paine and his wife, and the parson and his maid were blown up all in one day."



Unfortunately, we are not told what kind of explosion it was, nor are there any records of that period, which might throw light upon that sad disaster. Perhaps after all it was not such a very serious calamity, and that the said persons were merely blown up by the then vicar for neglect of duty.

Two instances of remarkable longevity are also recorded in the registers of death. George Westwood, aged 102, and Arthur Bradshaw, aged 100. From this we may fairly conclude, that in bygone days West Ham deservedly enjoyed a good reputation for the pureness and salubrity of its air. At the present day it seems to have lost a good deal of its former salubrity; at any rate we never hear of centenarians nowadays.

There are also many entries of persons who died from the plague, which broke out in London in 1665, and penetrated into West Ham. One hundred and fifty eight victims of this terrible scourge are recorded in the registers during the ten months that it infected this neighbourhood.

As the mortality from other causes was during that period considerably above the average, we may conclude, that it generally was an unhealthy season. There is a tone of great simplicity in the registration of the deaths at this period, which implies that the population was small and primitive. Thus: "Richard Tanner, that was drowned in a pond at

Playstowe, was buried January 9th, 1660." "A poor childe, named John, buried from Stratford, November 10th, 1662." "A man that was killed and thrown into a pond at Gallows Green, was buried the 4th December, 1666," and many others of a similar character.



## CHAPTER XVI.

Then farewell, oh my friends; light o'er my grave  
 The green sod lay, and dew it with the tear  
 Of memory affectionate.

DR. DODD.

## WEST HAM CHURCH.

THOMAS ROSE.

DR DODD.

A complete list of the Vicars of West Ham, commencing with the year 1334, with the dates of their appointments and the names of their successive patrons, may be seen in the vestry of the Church. They were all appointed by the Abbot and Convent until the year 1538, when West Ham Abbey was resigned into the hands of Henry VIII. From that time the names of the successive Kings and Queens of England appear as patrons of the living.

Of the early vicars there is, as a general rule, but little information come down to us. We know, however, that Thomas Rose, who was presented to the living in 1551, was amongst the first preachers of the reformed doctrines. He was an eloquent, powerful preacher. While he was Vicar of Hadleigh, in Suffolk, which was one of the first towns in England that received the doctrines of the reformation, he vehemently denounced the idolatrous worship of images.

It happened, that there was an idol named "The Rood of Dovercourt," a full-sized wooden figure of Christ, dressed in gown and slippers. Many devoted pilgrims came from far to worship it, and brought their offerings to the monks. It was generally believed, that it had miraculous powers, and that no man could shut the Church door, which continually stood open day and night.

Hearing Mr. Rose denounce this image and inspired by their new born hatred against image worship, three weavers of Dedham, together with a fourth from East Bergholt, undertook of their own authority to put away this idol, which they regarded as no better than a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. They went "one wondrous moonlight night" to Dovercourt, a distance of ten miles, removed the idol from its shrine and took it to some convenient spot close by, where they burnt it to ashes. This incident occurred in 1532.

In consequence of this desecration they were apprehended, tried for sacrilege and condemned to death. They were, however, offered their lives if they would inform against Mr. Rose, who was suspected of being privy to the robbery. On refusing to do this, three were hanged in chains at three different places in the neighbourhood, in order to intimidate those who might be disposed to follow so audacious an example. The fourth escaped. Fox, in his "Book of Martyrs" says "that these

three persons through the Spirit of God at their death did more to edify the people in Godly learning than all the sermons that had been preached there a long time before."

Soon after Thomas Rose was seized and committed to prison, where he was placed with his body on the ground and his feet in a pair of high stocks, until he was benumbed and nearly dead. Being released he was made one of Cromwell's chaplains, but by the persecution of the Duke of Norfolk he was obliged to go abroad, and he was taken prisoner on his passage.

After his liberation he received (1551) from Edward VI. the vicarage of West Ham, of which he was deprived by Queen Mary and was brought before the Bishops. He then made his escape to the Continent, but returned upon the accession of Queen Elizabeth, and again took possession of the vicarage of West Ham. He resigned it in 1563, when he was appointed by the Crown to the living of Luton, in Bedfordshire, which formed a quiet retreat for the persecuted preacher. Here he spent nearly thirteen years, and died in 1576 at the age of 74.

The name of the unfortunate Dr. Dodd is also mentioned among the clergy, though he never was Vicar of West Ham. In 1751 he was ordained deacon and became curate of West Ham, and in the following year he was appointed to the lectureship,

which he resigned in 1766. At that period he was already celebrated as a man of unrivalled eloquence, and writer of sermons and religious tracts. From the time he entered the service of the Church he resided at Plaistow, and made up the deficiencies of his income by superintending the education of some young gentlemen. One of these was the Hon. Philip Stanhope, who afterwards succeeded to the title of Lord Chesterfield.

On leaving West Ham Dr. Dodd fell into snares and launched out into extravagance, which his income was unequal to support. His habits of dissipation acquired such an influence over him that he became involved in considerable debts. To extricate himself from them, he was tempted to an act from the consequences of which he could not escape.

He forged a bond for the sum of £4,200 in the name of his former pupil, who by this time had become Lord Chesterfield, in the hope of being able to meet it before it was due. Detection of the fraud almost immediately followed. At the sessions held at the Old Bailey, his trial commenced on February 24th, 1777, and the commission of the offence having been proved, he was pronounced guilty and condemned to death.

When brought to the bar to receive his sentence and asked, what he had to say in his defence, he addressed the Court in an animated and pathetic

speech, imploring the judge to recommend him to the clemency of his Majesty, George III. Then he sank down, overwhelmed with agony, while sentence was pronounced upon him.

Attempts were made to obtain a pardon to save his life. Petitions signed by 30,000 people were sent to the throne, applying for mercy, but they were of no avail. On the 15th of June the Privy Council assembled, the warrant was ordered to be made for his execution, and on the 27th of June 1777 Dr. Dodd was hanged at Tyburn. When he arrived at the gallows he prayed not only for himself, but also for his wife, declaring that he died in the true faith of the Gospel, and in perfect love and charity with all mankind. His widow lived afterwards in great misery at Ilford, where she died on July 24th, 1784.



## CHAPTER XVII.

The blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church.

TERTULLIAN.

### QUEEN MARY AND THE MARTYRS.

Many and varied have been the scenes that have been witnessed on the great highway, which leads from London through Stratford to the Eastern Counties—some grand and gorgeous, some sad and mournful, some gay and frivolous.

When Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry VIII., was proclaimed Queen, in 1553, she came to London to take possession of the Crown. On her way up from Framlingham Castle, in Suffolk, she was entertained by Lord Riche, at his house in Wanstead Park. Here she received her sister, Princess Elizabeth, who rode out from London, accompanied by a cavalcade of knights, ladies and gentlemen, to meet the Queen and assure her of her loyalty.

It was from Wanstead House that Queen Mary made her formal entrance into London, with great pomp and royal splendour. It must have been a magnificent sight for the inhabitants of West Ham



and Stratford, who no doubt heartily joined in the general acclamation. They were not aware that at the same time Queen Mary was carrying in her heart the seeds of that morose bigotry, which has caused her name to be handed down to posterity with detestation.

How many hearths were made desolate during her short reign of five years! Into how many families were carried dismay and heartrending affliction to satisfy the jealousy with which she and her priestly advisers—Bishops Gardiner and Bonner—regarded the spread of the Gospel truth. It is affecting to think of the mournful travellers that passed along the Stratford road, and the sad scenes enacted there in consequence of her fierce persecution.

Devotion to the Roman Catholic religion was the central feature of Mary's life and character. She was resolved to bring the people back to the old religion, and it was only when all other means seemed to be failing that she had recourse to persecution. Many victims, and among them the most distinguished men in England, were brought to the scaffold and to the stake. The county of Essex had a large share in the sad and cruel persecution of Mary's reign.

One of the first victims chosen for execution was Dr. Rowland Taylor, vicar of Hadleigh, in Suffolk, in the year 1555. Sad and mournful must

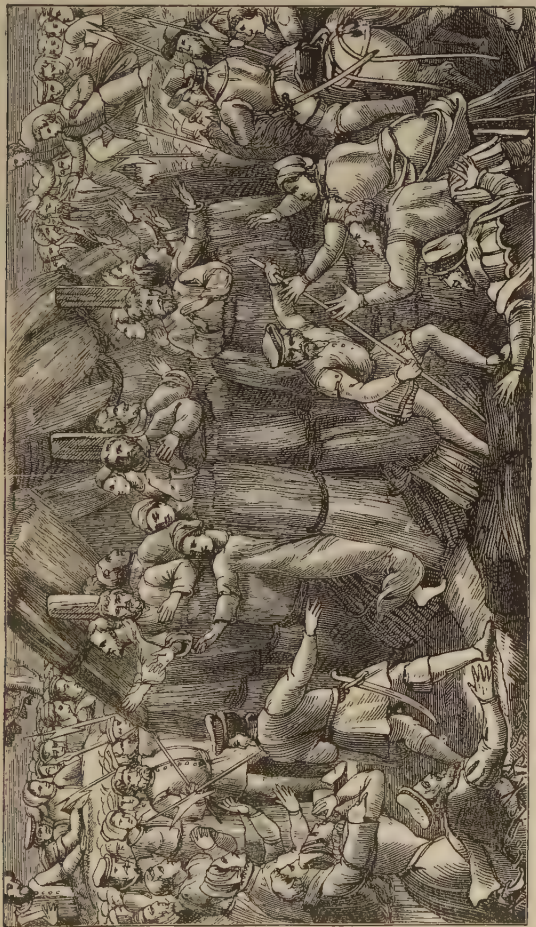
have been the spectacle, when the aged vicar passed through Stratford on his way to Oldham Common, near his own parish, where he was to suffer death.

The narrative of his sufferings is one of the most affecting stories connected with the history of the British reformation. While he was passing along the high road, the people seemed to have revolted at the cruelties perpetrated upon him. The journey was at last over, and the place was reached where he was to suffer. When the people saw his reverend face, with a long white beard, they burst out with weeping tears and sorrowful voices, saying: "God save thee, good Dr. Taylor; God strengthen thee; the Holy Ghost comfort thee."

He wished, but was not suffered, to speak. When he had prayed, he went to the stake and kissed it. Then he set himself into a pitch-barrel, which they had set for him to stand on, and "so stood with his back upright against the stake, with his hands folded together and his eyes towards Heaven, and so let himself be burned." One of the executioners "cruelly cast a fagot at him, which hit upon his head and brake his face, that the blood ran down his visage."

So stood he still without crying or moving, with his hands folded together, till Soyce, with a halberd brutally struck him on the head, that the brains fell out and the dead corpse fell down into the fire.

Sad and affecting as the spectacle of Dr. Rowland Taylor's procession along our high road must have been to the beholder, still more distressing and revolting was the scene, when in June, 1556,



STRAFORD MARTYRS, 1556.

eleven men and two women, being all of Essex, were burnt at one fire at Stratford. Their names are: Henry Adlington, Lawrence Parnam, Henry Wye, William Hallywell, Thomas Bowyer, George Searles, Edmund Hurst, Lyon Cawch, Ralph Jackson, John Derifall, John Routh, Elizabeth Pepper and Agnes George.

Early on the morning of the 27th of June, 1556, they were conducted from Newgate to Stratford-le-Bow. They were placed in three carts and pinioned, and thus commenced their last journey. The cavalcade under guard moved through Whitechapel along the Mile End Road to Stratford, where they were to suffer death. By this time no less than 20,000 persons had assembled to see "how God's people could still endure the fiery furnace."

The eleven men were tied to three stakes, the two women loose in the midst, without any stake, and so they were all burned in one fire "with much love to one another, that it made all the lookers-on marvel." We are told that the love which these shrouded saints showed to one another, and the undaunted courage they manifested, astonished the concourse assembled on this occasion. The behaviour of so many martyrs of all conditions in life, some even of the gentler sex, and their patiently enduring the acutest torments, struck into the people's minds. All these martyrs were of the

laity. There was no priest or minister amongst them. It was the offering of the laity to the great cause of Reformation.

William Harris of Cricksea, who was that year Sheriff of Essex, must have had a most unenviable office to discharge. Alarmed by the signs of sympathy on the part of the people at the sight of the sufferers, he ordered the fire to be applied to the rushes, uttering the words: "God knoweth best when his corn is ripe." In a few minutes all was over, save the effect of this awful scene. Indeed this very incident may well be supposed to have helped to turn the scale in favour of the Reformation.

During the last three years of Queen Mary's reign upwards of 300 victims perished in the flames. The people sickened at the work of death; open sympathy began to be shown to the sufferers for conscience' sake. It was the death of the Queen alone, which averted a general revolt. She left none to lament her, and there was not even the semblance of sorrow for her loss.

The cruel persecution of the Protestants, which has cast so much infamy upon her reign, did not actually begin until six months after her marriage with Philip II. of Spain, in 1554. It is not difficult to see, that it was greatly due to the triumph of ideas imported from Spain, the land of the

Inquisition. How far Queen Mary herself was responsible for the cruelties practised, is a matter of doubt.

We are told that during the greater part of that time she lived in the strictest seclusion, almost helpless with ill health. Broken down with sickness, with grief at her husband's heartlessness, she became a prey to the deepest melancholy. Perhaps she hardly realised the full horror of what was done under her sanction—yet no excuse can free her memory from the dark shadow which rests upon it.

The whole nation rejoiced when Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne. But it is sad to think that she had not reigned many years, before she began with cruel energy to persecute the Roman Catholics. Hundreds of priests were tortured and executed, while a yet greater number perished in the filthy and fever-stricken jails, into which they were plunged.

When the Martyrs' Memorial in Stratford was about to be erected in St. John's Churchyard (1879), a great controversy arose on the question, whether the martyrdom took place at Stratford-atte-Bow, in Middlesex, or at Stratford-le-Bow, which is in Essex. If we consider that 20,000 attended the great burning of the thirteen martyrs, we must naturally look for a place capable of holding such a number.

Now, at that time and even within memory of people still living, there was a wide open space,



where St. John's Church stands, which formed part of Stratford Common, and extended as far as Carnarvon Road, Romford Road. Here was abundant room for the vast multitude of people, who had gathered together from all the lower parts of Essex, to witness this sad spectacle. We look in vain for such an area round Bow Church. Then the neighbourhood also of the Forest, which extended down to Stratford at that time—hence our names “Forest Lane,” “Forest Gate,” “Hamfrith Road” (Frith means underwood)—furnished ample means for fagots and brushwood.

Moreover, when the Memorial was erected, there were persons still living, whose families have resided at Stratford for many generations. They had heard their ancestors speak of a certain martyrdom having taken place in the Broadway.

Foxe in his “Book of Martyrs” gives a detailed account of the burning of this group of martyrs. They were conducted early on the morning of the 27th of June, 1556, from Newgate to Stratford-le-Bow. It would appear, that the name of Stratford-le-Bow has led people into the error of confounding it with Stratford-atte-Bow, the present Bow.

Old writers tell us that Stratford-le-Bow was the same as Stratford Langthorne. Ogilby in his “Traveller's Guide” (1674) says: Passing over several branches of the river Lea you enter “Strat-

ford Langthorne," otherwise "Stratford-le-Bow." Lysons in his "Environs of London" (1796) speaks of Stratford-le-Bow as being situate on the other—that is, the Essex—side of Bow Bridge. Wright's "History of Essex" (1835) mentions Stratford Langthorne or le-Bow. A manuscript in the British Museum, dated 1758, gives an account of the Abbey Stratford Langthorne or at Bogh, in the parish of West Ham, Essex.

Even to this day the whole mile of causeway between Bow and Stratford is called Stratford-le-Bow by the old inhabitants, and the Post Office (271, High Street) was within the last ten years still called that of Stratford-le-Bow.

Moreover the "Statute of heresy" first passed in the reign of Henry IV., and revived in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Mary, distinctly provides, that heretics should be executed "in wide spaces and as near their homes as possible" for the purpose of striking terror into the minds of the neighbours. Since all the 13 martyrs were Essex people there cannot be a shadow of doubt about the fact, that they were put to death in their own county, and not at Bow which is in Middlesex.





## MARTYRS.

Let our choir new anthems raise;  
 Wake the morn with gladness;  
 God Himself to joy and praise  
 Tunes the Martyrs' sadness.  
 This the day that won their crown,  
 Open'd heaven's bright portal,  
 As they laid the mortal down  
 And put on the immortal.

Never flinch'd they from the flame,  
 From the torture never;  
 Vain the foeman's sharpest aim,  
 Satan's best endeavour.  
 For by faith they saw the land  
 Decked in all its glory,  
 Where triumphant now they stand  
 With the victor's story.

Faith they had that knew not shame,  
 Love that could not languish;  
 And eternal hope o'ercame  
 Momentary anguish.  
 He who trod the self-same road  
 Death and hell defeated;  
 Wherefore these their passions show'd  
 Calvary repeated.

Up and follow, Christian men!  
 Press through toil and sorrow.  
 Spurn the sight of fear,—and then—  
 Oh! the glorious morrow!  
 Who will venture on the strife?  
 Who will first begin it?  
 Who will seize the land of life?  
 Warriors, up and win it!

Translated from the Latin by J. M. NEALE.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Why! this is very midsummer madness.

SHAKESPEARE.

WILL KEMP.

Far different from the sad scene we have related in the preceding chapter was the spectacle which a noisy and mirthful crowd went out to see forty three years afterwards, on the first Monday in Lent, in the year 1599. Assembled by the wayside the eager crowd anxiously awaited at Stratford the arrival of William Kemp, the distinguished comedian and buffoon, who had made a bet that he would dance along the road, all the way from London to Norwich. Will Kemp belonged to the same company of actors as Shakespeare, in whose plays he acted the part of the clown. He was the acknowledged master of his time in the art of comic dancing, and was greatly loved and admired.

That he was a practised dancer is proved by the feat of which he published an account in a tract, called "Kemp's nine days' wonder; a dance from London to Norwich in nine days." He started at seven o'clock in the morning from in front of the

Lord Mayor's House, and half London was astir to see the beginning of the great exploit. His legs were garnished with bells to the number of twenty or more on each leg; the handkerchiefs or napkins were held in the hands or fastened on the shoulders, as shown in the accompanying picture.



WILL KEMP.

He was accompanied by his "taberer," who was equipped with pipe and tabor, William Bee, his servant, and an "overseer" or umpire, to see that everything was performed according to promise. The journey was almost as trying to the taborer as to Kemp, for he had his drum over his left arm and his flageolet in his left hand, while he beat the drum with his right. Through the East End of London, along the Whitechapel road, Kemp danced to the sound of his jingling bells, followed by a good-humoured crowd, reckoned by<sup>1</sup> thousands.

The people of Stratford had got up a bear-baiting show in his honour, knowing "how well he loved the sport." But the crowd, which had gathered to see him, was so great that he himself only succeeded in hearing "the bear roar and the dogs howl." At Ilford he rested and was welcomed by the people of the town, who "offered him carouses in 'the Great Spoon,' a vessel in the shape of a spoon, holding above a quart 'one whole draught being able at that time to have drawn his little wits dry,' and being afraid of the old proverb 'He had need of a long spoon that eats with the Devil,' he soberly gave his boon companions the slip."

From Ilford, by moonshine, he set forward dancing within a quarter of a mile from Romford. There being the end of his first day's dance, a kind gentleman of London offered him his horse, so "he leapt into the saddle and rode to the Inn." On the second day he strained his hip, but "cured the strain by dancing."

At Brentwood such a crowd had gathered to see him, that he could scarcely make his way to the tavern. There, as he relates, two cutpurses were caught in the act, who had followed with the crowd from London. They declared that they had a wager upon the dance, but Kemp recognised one of them as a noted thief, whom he had seen tied to a post in the theatre.

Next day he reached Chelmsford, but here the crowd which had accompanied him from London had dwindled down to a couple of hundred people. The picture shows the appearance of Kemp as he went along with bells on his legs; the whole figure is full of movement. Tom Sly is evidently walking fast to keep up with his master "whose pace in dancing was not ordinary." Indeed, if the taborer travelled on foot, his performance can have been no less remarkable than that of Kemp himself. He tells us, that from Hingham to Barford Bridge, near Norwich, he was accompanied by five young men "running all the way with me, for otherwise my pace was not for footmen."

The whole narrative is full of incidents. Ever attended by a group of spectators, often by large crowds, he danced along "through miry country ways, the water and mud over his ankles." The ten miles between Bury and Thetford he accomplished in three hours. At Bury he was detained some days by the great snow that fell. At Thetford the noble gentleman, Sir Edward Rich, gave him a bountiful entertainment. His adventures with "mine host" at Rockland in Norfolk, "who was a very boon companion" are celebrated in rhymes that have been attributed to Shakespeare.

The journey was concluded on the evening of the ninth day by his leaping over the wall of St. John's Churchyard, in Norwich, "and getting into

the Mayor's gates a nearer way." In Norwich the City Waits received him in the open market place with an official concert in the presence of thousands. He was the guest of the town and entertained at its expense.

He also received handsome presents from the Mayor, and was admitted to "the Guild of Merchant Venturers," whereby he was assured a share in their yearly income to the amount of forty shillings. The measure of his leap and the very buskins in which he performed his dance were nailed to the wall in the Norwich Guildhall, but they have long since disappeared.





### THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE BOROUGH OF WEST HAM.

The Sword and pastoral Staff—hilt and crook are seen at the top of the Arms—represent justice and religion.

The Sun rising in splendour suggests the borough's rising prosperity.

The Ship in full sail is emblematical of our great docks, commerce and shipping industry.

The crossed hammers are typical of the Thames Iron and the Railway works.

The crosier in the centre is a symbol of pastoral authority and care.

The three chevrons in base are the armorial bearings of the house of Montfichet. They represent the rafters of a house and show, that the person, to whom the coat of arms was first granted, was the originator of his family.

The ancient Abbey, which was founded by William de Montfichet and endowed by him with all his lands in East and West Ham, adopted his "Arms" with the significant addition of the crosier.

The above coat of arms was granted to West Ham, when it was created a Borough, 1887, and gives the whole history of West Ham, from the earliest times down to the present day, pictorially laid out.

The device is: "Deo confidimus"—We trust in God.



MONTFICHET.



ABBAY.

## CHAPTER XIX.

For forms of government let fools contest  
 Whate'er is best administer'd is best.

POPE.

## THE BOROUGH OF WEST HAM.

A century ago West Ham was a very pleasant country district, studded with pleasant villas and handsome mansions. Noblemen as well as wealthy City merchants used to reside here. But, unhappily, it is no longer a favourite resort of the wealthier classes. There are at the present time but few rich or well-to-do citizens residing in it. Most of the employers of labour, who draw their wealth from the teeming factories, have left the neighbourhood to settle in more fashionable quarters.

It is the industrial classes only, such as live by their labour, who are accumulating here. The continuous growth of its population almost surpasses credit. Spread over an area of 4,706 acres, the population increased from 18,817 in 1851, to 267,308 in 1901, and is now estimated at over 300,000. This enormous growth is, no doubt,



partly owing to the formation of railways with their extensive works, but to a great extent also to the numerous manufacturing industries, the gas works, the chemical and other factories, which employ thousands of people.

In consequence of the restrictions that had been imposed upon the manufacturers in the Metropolis, it became difficult and harassing for them to carry on their works, especially those of an objectionable character. Hence factory after factory was removed to the Essex side of the river Lea, where these restrictions did not prevail. The construction of the Albert and Victoria Docks, which have made West Ham one of the greatest ports of the world, still further increased the industrial population.

Thus teeming with numbers and alive with industry, and steadily extending its trade, West Ham has become a manufacturing centre of the first importance as well as a haven and home for commerce from all parts of the globe. Nevertheless, it is one of the poorest of all the suburbs of London, for, with the increase in the population, which includes an immensely large proportion of poor people and thousands of unemployed, the rates have become an oppressive burden upon the inhabitants.

By the redistribution scheme, which came into operation in 1885, West Ham has obtained Parliamentary representation. The district is divided into north and south, each division returning one

member. In the following year (1886) West Ham was accorded a Royal Charter of Incorporation, by which the Council took over the duties and responsibilities of the Board of Health, which had governed the town since 1856.

Under the Charter the Borough is represented by a Mayor, 12 Aldermen and 36 Councillors, who are elected by the Burgesses of the 12 wards, into which the Borough is divided for municipal purposes. Each ward elects three Councillors. The first election took place on November 1st, 1886, and on November 9th, the late Mr. John Meeson was unanimously chosen the first Mayor.

There is no doubt of the fact, that during the twenty-one years of its existence the Town Council has exercised great energy and watchfulness in its endeavours to amend the condition of this extensive and densely populated district. Every effort has been used to make sanitary and other local reforms, which have materially assisted in fortifying the health, and in promoting the well-being of the Borough.

There is, perhaps, no town in England, which owing to its abnormal growth and unprecedented development has presented to its governing body so many difficulties. It is, therefore, much to the credit of the Corporation, that they have successfully grappled with the great problems before them, and that they have done much good work for the public welfare.

One of the greatest benefits which they have conferred upon the community is unquestionably the acquisition (1903) and final electrification of the tramway system, in 1904. Thus a means has been provided of carrying the people quickly and cheaply, without interfering in any way with the other traffic, throughout the whole length and breadth of the Borough.

The main centre of the tramways is in Stratford Broadway. The Council are making every effort to link up the system with the adjoining neighbourhood. When Bow and Bromley on the one side, and East Ham on the other side, become joined to the West Ham system, and a through car service is established, the great benefit of the undertaking to the community at large will be fully realised.

It is generally acknowledged that the West Ham tramway system compares favourably with any other system in or near London. Moreover, the undertaking is carried on on sound business lines, and as it has already proved to be a profitable concern, the ratepayers have just cause to be proud of their tramways.

The Electric generating station has been erected on the site of the disused pumping station at Canning Town. Although situate in the most remote corner of the Borough, it is the centre, whence proceeds that mysterious power, which not only lights our streets, but also sends our tramcars whizzing along the roads.

## CHAPTER XX.

By sports like these are all their cares beguiled.

GOLDSMITH.

## BOROUGH OF WEST HAM.

## SANITATION. RECREATION GROUNDS.

What the sanitary condition of West Ham was some thirty years ago, may be gathered from a report of an examination made by a Government official. It is there stated that "it was a dreadfully insanitary place, with no drainage except into open ditches, filled with refuse of the foulest description, which poisoned the atmosphere." The open ditches are happily all gone, and we now have a complete system of drainage.

It seems a strange thing that, although the London Northern Outfall Sewer intersects our parish, West Ham was debarred from connecting its sewerage system with that of the London County Council. After a long and bitter struggle, however, the West Ham Council at last obtained by Act of Parliament (1893) power to connect its system with that of London, by which the sewage is now (since 1900) diverted from the old pumping station at Canning Town to the new one at Abbey Mills. The result is a considerable improvement both to the drainage and the general health of the Borough.

The preservation of open spaces too has materially contributed to the improvement of the sanitary condition of the Borough. It goes without saying, that open spaces are not only necessary, if the population is to be preserved from physical deterioration, but they are also a great factor in the real education and the social and religious life of the people. To a rapidly growing town like West Ham it is a matter of the greatest importance to be in possession of public recreation grounds. No greater boon could have been conferred upon the toiling masses than the preservation of open spaces. They afford a very enjoyable substitute for the open country, and are a constant source of delight and healthful recreation to hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have but little pleasure in their lives, and are compelled to pass the majority of hours in dull and toilsome drudgery. Rest and recreation after toil within easy distance of the home, and a place where the children may see the fair sights of outward nature, are, undeniably, most desirable.

● In addition to West Ham Park, which is the largest of the public parks, and under the control of the City Corporation, there are five more Recreation grounds. One is at Balaam Street, Plaistow, another at Beckton Road, and a third in Hermit Road; the other two, which are of smaller dimensions, are in West Ham Lane and at Silvertown.



WEST HAN PARK.

Adorned with trees and plenty of flowering shrubs as well as with tastily arranged flower beds, they present a lovely sight, and surpass in picturesqueness and beauty many of the finest pleasure grounds in private hands. A portion of the grassland in some of the Parks has been judiciously dedicated to manly sports and pastimes. Cricket grounds and cricket pitches have been made for the accommodation of the various clubs, which have the privilege granted them of playing in the Parks. Pavilions have also been erected for the convenience of the public, where ample refreshments on temperance principles can be obtained at the customary prices.

To make the Recreation grounds as near perfection as can be, band-stands have been erected, where orchestral bands discourse excellent music on stated evenings during the summer months. Nothing can be pleasanter than to see the crowds of people, men, women and children, clustering round the band-stands and listening to the strains of music, which the Council has provided.

Of all the fine arts none can compare with music for its beneficial effect upon mankind. It delights all classes and all ages, and is, undoubtedly, one of the best moral agencies by which the character of man can be influenced. "Though music cannot make a bad man a good man"—says Mr. W. E. Hickson, a prophet of popular music—"yet there is no man who would not have been better for the influence of music."



## CHAPTER XXI.

Charity is the scope of all God's commands.

CHRYSOSTOM.

## WEST HAM.

## CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS.

West Ham is well off for charitable institutions. There are ten almshouses on the east side of the churchyard of the parish church. They were built by the parish on the site of two cottages and gardens left by John Newman, in 1636, and are now inhabited by twenty poor women over 60 years old. Each of them receives a small sum of money weekly, and twenty shillings at Christmas.

There are also two almshouses in Gift Lane, left by Roger Harris, in 1633, which have since been re-built and now provide homes for six poor women. Besides these almshouses there are numerous charitable bequests to the poor of the whole parish, left from time to time by various benefactors, and vested in the official Trustees of Charitable Funds. All these benefactions are recorded on four votive tablets, placed on the walls of the Tower porch of the parish church.



Fifty years ago there was no Dispensary in West Ham, and no Hospital nearer than the London Hospital. Though the urgent need of such an Institution had long been felt, it was not until 1861, that a movement was set on foot towards the establishment of a dispensary. A house was purchased in the Romford Road, and a staff appointed for medical and dispensary purposes. In course of time, however, it was found that the building was insufficient for the requirements of the neighbourhood, where manufactories were rising on all sides and the bulk of the inhabitants gained their livelihood by their daily labours.

Subsequently, in 1879, the present dispensary was erected in West Ham Lane. With the rapid growth of the population and a proportionate increase in accidents and cases of sickness, it became more and more evident, that the dispensary needed supplementing by providing Hospital accommodation. Great efforts were made to raise the necessary funds, and in 1890 the present Hospital—now called the West Ham and East London Hospital—was opened. It is chiefly intended for the treatment of accidents.

How great the need was for a local Hospital is testified in the most conclusive manner by the fact that, within less than a month from the opening, every bed in the male ward was occupied. Four years after, the Hospital was enlarged through the

generosity of Mr. Passmore Edwards and now provides accommodation for sixty patients, including a limited number of urgent medical cases.

During its existence the Hospital has proved an inestimable boon to the labouring poor, the majority of whom are engaged in more or less perilous occupations. The record of work is steadily increasing and, as the district is a poor and growing one, the work of the Hospital becomes more and more arduous year by year. Steps are now being taken to enlarge the Institute by additional accommodation, and the work is rapidly progressing.

Besides the West Ham and East London Hospital there are also the St. Mary's Hospital for Women and Children, and the Nurses' Home in Plaistow. Both Institutions are carrying on a very useful work, and have proved a great blessing to the populous district in which they are situate. The Seamen's Hospital, situated between the Royal Victoria and Albert Docks also deserves recognition. It is intended not only for English seamen but for the seamen of all nations, and in that respect it occupies a unique position among the Hospitals of this country.

In addition to these charitable Institutions, which are entirely supported by voluntary subscriptions, the Borough possesses a fever Hospital at Plaistow, a small-pox Hospital at Dagenham, and a lunatic asylum at Chadwell Heath.

When West Ham was created a County Borough in 1889, and had thus become a separate self-governed County, the Essex County Council raised objections to West Ham patients being sent to the Brentwood lunatic asylum. In consequence it became necessary for West Ham to make a separate provision for the housing and maintenance of its own lunatics. Several years, however, elapsed before anything was done. In 1894 a site was purchased at Chadwell Heath and buildings were erected which cover about ten acres, with ninety acres of surrounding land.

The Asylum is one of the most perfect Institutions, and provides a home for 800 patients and the requisite staff. The erection of the building was begun in 1899, and completed in 1901. It is a substantial structure of red brick and is split up into blocks connected by corridors. Besides the administrative block in the centre of the building, there are a recreation hall, laundries and workshops for various trades, and in the grounds is a handsome chapel for the use of the inmates.

It is affecting to think that the accommodation has already proved to be insufficient, and that it is necessary to proceed with an extension of the asylum.



## CHAPTER XXII.

Defer not till to-morrow to be wise;  
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.

CONGREVE.

## WEST HAM.

## CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

In the year 1801, when the whole population of West Ham numbered 6,485 souls, there were only three places of public worship, namely the ancient parish church of All Saints, the Brickfields Chapel, built in 1775, and a Roman Catholic chapel in Stratford, built in 1797. Fifty years later, when the population had risen to 18,817 we find that five more churches had been built, each with its group of schools, besides several Non-Conformist chapels and the Friends' Meeting House at Plaistow.

Owing to the continuous flood of immigration, which the large public works and factories caused to flow in during the latter half of the last century, it became absolutely necessary to provide further church accommodation. The fact that there are at the present day no less than nineteen ecclesiastical districts with a clergy amounting to sixty-eight in all, shows that the Church of England has endeavoured to keep pace, as far as possible, with the spiritual requirements of the ever-growing popu-

lation. Moreover, numerous Mission Halls, Roman Catholic Churches, as well as churches and chapels of all creeds and confessions have been established throughout the Borough, bearing witness to the growth in Christian activity.

In 1867 the parishes of East and West Ham, together with the other parishes of South Essex, which then still belonged to the ancient diocese of London, were transferred to the diocese of Rochester, and subsequently, in 1877, to that of St. Albans, to which they now belong.

From an historical point of view the change is much to be regretted, since the close connexion of London with Essex had been continuous from the 7th century, when Mellitus, Bishop of London, first went to preach the Gospel to the East Saxons, as mentioned in the fourth chapter of this history.

The present diocese being found too large to be conveniently administered by one Bishop, it has now been decided to form a new diocese.

If we turn to the kindred subject of education, we are met with a progress equally astonishing. It is difficult to picture to ourselves what the actual state of education was in West Ham in the first half of the last century, as there are no statistics to give us an exact record of the educational work.

There existed in West Ham proper, at the north-east corner of the parish church-yard a school, called

the Bonnell school. It was established and endowed, in 1769, with large sums of money, left by Sarah Bonnell, in 1761, for the education and clothing of eighty poor girls. In consequence of the Education Act of 1870, the original plan of the endowment was repealed. The condition of the school underwent a complete change and a new scheme was established, in 1873, to provide education for girls of the middle classes.

A high school for girls having in the meantime been erected in West Ham Lane—it has recently been transferred to the Grove—the Governors of the Trust established a system of exhibitions tenable at the school, which entitled the holders to total or partial exemption from entrance or tuition fees. Forty exhibitions were thus conferred upon girls, that is to say, one third upon girls who were either orphans or children of poor parents, and two thirds upon girls passing out of the elementary schools within the parish of West Ham.

Besides the Bonnell school for girls there were also two Charity Schools, maintained by parochial subscriptions and providing accommodation for 120 boys and 60 girls. The Trustees of the Bonnell school having expressed their willingness to adopt the parochial girls' school and incorporate it with that of the Bonnell school under their charge, a new boys' school was established in 1826, called the West Ham Boys' National School, to provide education

for 200 boys. It is interesting to learn from the minutes of the Board of the old parochial Charity schools, that each child on leaving school was presented by the Trustees with a Bible and a Prayer book.

The first school in Plaistow was a Lancasterian school, of which the Quakers were the chief supporters. After a time it was closed. Lancaster was the founder of Lancasterian schools in most parts of the civilised world. In 1805 he was honoured by an audience with George III., who said: "I wish that every poor child in my dominions may be able to read his Bible." The Lancasterian system consisted in teaching the elements of education by mutual or monitorial instruction.

Then there was the old national school, a wooden lean-to, a sort of rabbit hutch. The roof was not water-tight, and as there were no means of building a school, the energetic mistress might often have been seen on a wet day with her umbrella up, teaching a hundred children. In 1831 St. Mary's school was opened and about 1840 the North Street schools were established.

In Stratford the only parish school was the British School in North Place, built in 1836. Both this school and the girls' and infants' school, which stood on the site now occupied by the Council school in Bridge road, were in 1891 incorporated with the Board school. The national schools in Station

Street, attended by 110 boys and 140 girls and incorporated with St. John's Church school in Chant Square, were not built until 1842.

A fair number of children were, no doubt, educated at the various private and Dame schools. However, up to the middle of the past century school accommodation was out of all proportion to the population. A vast number of children received no education at all, and were allowed to roam the streets like wild Arabs.

In 1861 the Pelly Memorial Schools at West Ham were opened, and since then many more church and other denominational schools have been built. Education was chiefly an affair of the Churches or left to voluntary efforts. National education was practically unknown until 1870, when the Elementary Education Act was passed.





## CHAPTER XXIII.

'Tis education forms the common mind;  
Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.

POPE.

## BOROUGH OF WEST HAM.

## SCHOOL BOARD.

## LIBRARIES.

In 1871 the West Ham School Board was established. Ever since its formation the Board was fully alive to its responsibilities, and strove worthily to carry out its duties. During its existence of 32 years forty-two Board Schools were built, providing accommodation for over 50,000 children, besides schools for the deaf, the physically and mentally defective, and for truants.

By the Education Act of 1902, which came into operation in West Ham on May 1st, 1903, the School Board was abolished, and its powers and duties were handed over to the Council of the County Borough. The Council lost no time in preparing a scheme for the formation of an Education Committee, which was to carry on the educational work in the Borough. The Committee is composed of twenty-seven members, all of whom are chosen by the Council.

There are now forty-six Council Schools, providing places for about 60,000 children, and thirteen Non-provided or Voluntary Schools, with a capacity for 8,572 children. From the last report of the Education Committee we learn that the work in all these elementary schools continues to be thoroughly sound and good.

There are also two higher elementary schools at the Russell Road and Water Lane Centres. By the establishment of these schools 500 places have been provided for scholars of not less than 12 years of age, who will remain at school and receive a special course of instruction.

The Evening Continuation schools, which are an essential branch of the educational system, were established by the late School Board, and are each year becoming more popular and appreciated. The object of these schools is to afford those who have left school an opportunity to continue their education, either in the ordinary school subjects or in some special subjects, in order to fit them for a commercial or industrial career.

The classes are generally well attended by a large number of pupils, who thoroughly appreciate the instruction given. Admirable discipline is maintained, and the teaching is sound and skilfully given by highly qualified teachers. An extensive list of subjects has been provided, and no effort is spared to make the classes attractive. The in-

struction given includes commercial and general subjects, various branches of science and art, besides special classes in cookery and laundry work for girls.

The Borough is also in possession of a Secondary School in Whalebone Lane, with a Pupil Teacher Centre attached to it. Last year there were 540 pupils, of whom 220 were pupil teachers. The management of this school, which comprises a Senior mixed and a Junior mixed department, is in the hands of a specially appointed body of Governors. In a rapidly increasing industrial suburb like West Ham, the necessity for such an Institution had long been felt. It is worth recording that in the first two and a half years a large number of scholars have gained marks of distinction at the public examinations. It is also gratifying and encouraging that the parents are becoming more and more convinced of the advantage, and even necessity, of a higher education for the better equipment of their children, before they enter upon the battle of life.

The aim of a secondary school is to provide a liberal and useful education for the boys and girls, to give them a preparation to fit them for entering on the practical earning of a livelihood. To fulfil this object the course of instruction is a very comprehensive one, and includes, in addition to the elementary subjects, Latin, French, German, Physics, Chemistry, etc., and Needlework, Cooking, and Laundry Work for the girls.

To complete the educational system an excellent Technical Institute has also been founded, suited to the special needs of the district. This will be treated of in a separate chapter.

Since improved education has created in all classes of the community an increased desire and appetite for literature, libraries have become a necessity of our social life. West Ham is rich in public libraries.

Besides the Central Library for the northern portion of the Borough, and the Canning Town Library for the southern division, there is a third library at Plaistow, which was presented by Mr. Passmore Edwards, and a fourth at Custom House, which was erected out of funds provided by Mr. Carnegie.

The Central Library at Stratford has its main frontage upon the Water Lane side of the Green. It is both beautiful in its outward appearance, and convenient in its internal arrangements. No effort has been spared to make it a real and good source of education and recreation to all classes of the community.

The lending library contains 19,879 volumes, most of which are works on science, history, biography, and travel. Every other class of literature, however, is also well represented, and of fiction alone there are 5,548 volumes. The reference library contains no less than 20,593 volumes, many

of which are rare and valuable, representing every branch of literature. There is also a juvenile library of 2,266 volumes. The fact that in the Central Library alone the number of readers is 5,000, and the general attendance no less than 2,550 daily, fully proves its usefulness and popularity.

No one will dispute that the various libraries have accomplished much good work and proved exceedingly useful. Numbers of people are now enabled to obtain intellectual culture and enjoyment which otherwise would not have been within their reach.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

The desire of knowledge, like the thirst of riches, increases ever with the acquisition of it.—STERNE.

### TECHNICAL INSTITUTE.

Among the numerous Technical Institutes that have sprung up during the last ten years, both in London and all over the country, the Technical Institute of West Ham holds a prominent place. The site on which this admirable Institute stands, was and is still called “Stratford Green.” Not many years ago it was a green pasture, forming almost a complete square, surrounded on all sides by a shrubbery, and having a small pond in its centre.

Originally “the Green” was part of the ancient village Green or Common, which was of ample dimensions. It extended from the Broadway, Stratford, where St. John’s Church stands, as far as Carnarvon Road. A curious stone, which has carved upon it “Stratford Common,” and now stands in Dr. J. B. Kennedy’s stable yard, marked its boundary. This village green was part of the ancient Manor of West Ham, and formed in bygone days the southern boundary of the Forest of Epping.

It was not until the beginning of the last century that the greater portion of this ancient common was enclosed and fenced in. This happened in the "good" old times, when the powerful manorial Lords still asserted the absolute right of enclosing open spaces, and filching with impunity from a patient and long-suffering people the land that was common to all.

In old documents "Stratford Green" is called "The Gallows' Green," from which it may be presumed that such an erection stood there. At any rate it is recorded in the old chronicles of Essex that a certain Richard de Montfichet, when Sheriff of Essex, had license "to erect there a gallows in his Lordship of Hame." It is, however, not quite clear whether it was the father, who died in 1202, or his son Richard, who succeeded him. The latter was one of the famous twenty-five Barons chosen at Runnymede in 1215, to enforce the observance of Magna Charta, the great Charter of England's liberties.

An aged inhabitant of Stratford, now deceased, used to relate that she well remembered having seen a whipping post in an open field, which formed part of "The Green," where deer stealers were flogged even in her days. Whether the local reminiscences and traditions, which have been handed down through successive ages, that executions took place there even up to the beginning of the eighteenth

century be true or not, it remains an undisputed fact that "Stratford Green" was in olden times a place of punishment and public execution.

Since those dark days West Ham has passed through many changes. What once was a quiet rural hamlet has, by steadily advancing progress, become an important centre of industry and commercial enterprise. It is, therefore, not surprising that gradually a general desire made itself felt to establish a Technical Institute. The chief object was to promote the industrial and technical knowledge of the young men and women by means of instruction in the general rules and principles of the art and sciences applicable to any handicraft, trade, or business, and their practical application.

No more suitable spot could be selected for the erection of such an Institute than "Stratford Green," in the Romford Road. It is the most central and convenient place in this large and extensive Borough. That portion of "The Green," on which it stands, was purchased of the Lord of the Manor by Mr. Thomas Curtis in 1840. After his death, 1862, it came into the possession of Mrs. Sarah Curtis, who left it by will to her niece, Miss Arabella Eccles. The latter sold it in 1894 for the sum of £5,376 to the Corporation of West Ham.

Since the Corporation had received, in 1891, a grant under the Customs and Inland Revenue Act, which provided £5,500 a year, the whole of the





TECHNICAL INSTITUTE AND LIBRARY.

accumulated money was devoted to the purpose of technical education. Afterwards, Parliamentary sanction was obtained to use some of these imperial funds for the purpose of establishing a Central public library, and it was decided that the two establishments should be housed in one common building.

It was entirely at the option of the local authorities whether they applied the money at their disposal to technical instruction, or to the relief of the rates, the reduction of which would have been very acceptable. It testifies to the wisdom and foresight as well as to the municipal activity and energy of the Borough Council, that they resolved to employ the funds for such desirable and useful objects as a Technical Institute and a public library.

The handsome and ornamental structure was built and furnished at a cost of £70,000, and covers, with the adjoining Natural History Museum, the gift of Mr. Passmore Edwards, about two acres of ground. It is also worth mentioning, that it is one of the few Technical Institutes in the whole Metropolitan area, which is under the direct control of a Municipal body. For completeness and perfect organisation it need not fear comparison with any other. It is provided with well equipped workshops for every kind of trade, with laboratories for mechanical and electrical engineering, physics and

chemistry, with a well-fitted cookery school, laundry and needle-work rooms, together with properly fitted lecture and class rooms.

The students will thus be able to acquire in the classes a thorough knowledge of the scientific principles on which the local industries are based, and be prepared to take that intelligent interest in their daily work which is essential to success.

The foundation of the building was laid October 29th, 1896, by the Mayor of West Ham, Mr. Alderman William Crow, and on October 6th, 1898, the Institute was opened by Mr. Passmore Edwards. A year after, when the technical classes had scarcely got into working order, a fire broke out in the chemical laboratory, the origin of which has never been satisfactorily explained. The fire spread so rapidly in all directions, that it was only after seven hours of strenuous exertions that it was extinguished.

Fortunately, the Museum on the eastern side, and the books of the Free Library at the northern end of the building, were saved. Great damage had, however, been done, which was estimated at about £25,000. While the building was being restored, and at the same time enlarged, as it had already proved too small for its work, the Borough Council took at once steps to provide temporary accommodation for the technical classes in other Institutions, as well as temporary reading and news rooms.

On October 18th, 1900, the Institute was re-opened, and has since done excellent work under the able management of its Principal, who is aided by a large and efficient staff, several of whom are recognised teachers of the London University. A hopeful beginning has been made in the development of technical training and education, and the results have been very satisfactory. One of the most gratifying signs is that the number of students has steadily increased, and has at present reached 3,350, with an average weekly attendance of 2,281.

Technical education has now become a national question. The Board of Education has been made the Central Authority, not only for primary, but also secondary and technical education. In towns like West Ham, where a large proportion of the population belongs to the industrial classes, it is of the highest importance that every inducement and facility should be given for study and improvement, so as to keep abreast of other nations. Nor can there be any doubt that the general industry of the country is immensely benefited by stimulating and encouraging local talent, and bringing into full operation the ability and acquirements of the artists, artisans, and workmen.

It is, therefore, becoming exceedingly important to secure the co-operation of employers of labour, in order that their apprentices and young workmen may be given facilities to attend the trade classes.

Good results would also be attained if some more effective means were organised of bringing home to the minds of labourers of all classes the extent and variety of the educational opportunities provided, by giving competition prizes, or by establishing scholarships, tenable for a certain period.

May the Technical Institute of West Ham continue to flourish, and as an important factor in industrial progress, help to promote the advancement, the power, and the prosperity of the nation!

Adjoining the Technical Institution is the Passmore Edwards Museum, which was opened in October, 1900. It contains the Essex local natural history collection of the "Essex Field Club," consisting of an authentic series of all forms of animal and vegetable life, whether recent or fossil, occurring in the district. It is an exceptionally valuable collection for the education and enjoyment of the public, and of great use to pupils in school and elementary science classes.



## CHAPTER XXV.

Time rolls his ceaseless course.

Old times are changed, old manners gone.

SCOTT.

## STRATFORD.

The old Roman road which led from London into the eastern parts of Essex, crossed the river Lea at Old Ford and then passed through the Leyton marshes to Stratford. From this road—or in Saxon parlance “Straet” (Street)—is derived the name of Stratford, “the Street at the Ford.” To distinguish it from Stratford-atte-Bow it was anciently surnamed Stratford-le-Bow, or Stratford Langthorne. It probably derived its additional name of “Langthorne,” either from some remarkable tall thorn, which had attracted attention and was talked of as a landmark, or from the length of thorns growing in this part of the forest.

In the twelfth century the village of Stratford and its neighbourhood must have been very pretty. The historian Fitz-Stephen, gives the following description: “There are cornfields, pastures, and delightful meadows, intermixed with pleasant

streams, on which stands many a mill, whose clack is so grateful to the ear. Beyond these an immense forest extends itself, beautiful with woods and groves, and full of the lairs and coverts of beast and game, stags, bucks, boars, and wild bulls." Wild recesses may still be found among the remnants of the vast forest of Essex, though no longer infested with wild bulls and boars.

In Ogilby's "Traveller's Guide," a book of the roads, published in 1674, Stratford is described as "consisting chiefly of inns." In the old coaching days a small town or village on any main road often consisted largely or almost entirely of inns, and lived upon the traffic.



As a pictorial sign "the Swan" is very common in Essex. The fondness of the bird for liquid—



though of a purer kind than usually supplied at public-houses—is said to have been the reason for its common adoption as a public-house sign. But it is more likely that it had an heraldic origin, the white Swan forming part of the coat of arms of the De Bohuns and other great families of Essex.

In days gone by “the Swan” at Stratford was much frequented for the sake of its garden and bowling green. Both garden and green unhappily now no longer exist, and even the sculptured “Swan,” which for so many years, and so peacefully, sat perched on the top of the sign post in front of the inn, has winged its flight.

One of the former landlords of “the Swan” (1825), named Lound, recommended the charms of his house in a poetic strain, and praised his inn especially for its mode of reckoning,

“Which is the most important object  
To every loyal British subject.  
In short the best accommodation’s found  
By those who deign to visit Lound.”

The still existing “Swan” of Stratford has, like many of its fellows in recent years, been greatly altered in appearance by the hand of the modern restorer. It is no longer an inn, but an hotel.

In the “British Traveller” for 1771, there is a statement to the effect “that the hamlet of Strat-



ford, which was formerly a small village, had at that time been very largely increased by the addition of a vast number of houses." In the earlier part of last century Stratford still boasted a good many fine and commodious residences, belonging to noble and wealthy citizens. Most of them have in lapse of time been swept away to make room for modern improvements. Only a few may still be seen, more or less modernised, while others are hidden by additional erections in front, now used as shops.

One of these is "Stratford House," in the Grove. This was the residence of Sir John Henniker, who served the office of High Sheriff for Essex in 1758. In 1765, King George III. granted him the dignity of a baronet, and subsequently (1800) raised him to the Peerage. On his death (1803) Stratford House became the property and occasional residence of his son, Lord Henniker, who died there on 4th December, 1823. The appearance of the house, which is now in the occupation of Mr. Rockley and Messrs. Lewis and Co., is much altered, in consequence of some erections in front, used as shops. The rooms on the ground and upper floors, now used as show-rooms, still show signs of former magnificence. Lord Henniker dying without issue, the property was disposed of. The Congregational Church in The Grove stands on ground that was part of the extensive gardens, for which the house was noted.

The north-east part of Stratford, known by the name of Maryland Point, derives its name from a merchant, who had made a fortune in Maryland. On his return to his native land he built "a cluster of houses near Stratford, and called the hamlet Maryland Point." The Essex historian, Salmon, writing in 1760, curtly remarks "that in the memory of man it was a rabbit warren." In later times, however, it contained several large mansions with extensive gardens attached to them. It is now covered with shops and dwelling houses, and contains a fine Railway Station.

Though Stratford is only incidentally mentioned in old records and chronicles, yet there are numerous notices, both of the place and of events that occurred there. The fact that Henry III. encamped there during his war with the Barons has already been mentioned in a previous chapter.

A further notice of Stratford occurs in the reign of Edward III. (1327-1377), which furnishes proof that the King did not consider sanitary regulations beneath his notice. By an Act, made with the consent of Parliament (1357), it was strictly prohibited, under pain of a year's imprisonment, "that an ox, sheep, or pig should be driven nearer to London than Stratford; that any butcher who dared to transgress this law was to be whipped in the market place."

The object of the Act was to prevent disease

being spread into the City by the accumulation of putrefying offal. Stratford now became the slaughter-house of the Metropolis.

Nor was meat the only article of provisions that the citizens of London received from Stratford, for it seems that their bread was extensively made there. The flour could easily be procured from the Abbey Mills, and the faggots for their ovens from the adjacent forest.

The regulations respecting bread and bakers were excessively strict; whoever transgressed them was severely punished. In 1419 the punishment of the hurdle was inflicted on some of the foreign bakers of Stratford. This punishment consisted in being drawn upon a hurdle through the principal streets of the City.

That Stratford was in ancient times a place of considerable importance, may be gathered from the fact that there was a Court House, in which the Forest Courts were occasionally held. These Courts were established for the government of the King's forests, for the punishment of all injuries done to the King's deer, and for the purpose of resisting encroachments.

On one occasion, in the year 1639, while the Court was sitting to settle matters of dispute, a drove of calves passed through Stratford. They suddenly stopped near the Court House, and made such a "bleating" that the Court had to forbear

speaking, till the noise was over and the calves were removed.

A knight of the County of Suffolk, who had lands in the forest, remarked to a knight of the County of Essex "that the Essex calves did make that bleating, as if the dumb creatures did understand that sentence was to be pronounced against the inhabitants in the forest, upon whose ground they fed."

But the Essex knight took offence at the words "Essex calves," and told the other knight "that they were Suffolk calves driven through Essex; therefore," said the Essex knight, "let not calves hereafter be cast upon Essex alone, but let Suffolk bear a share." This is, perhaps, the origin of the nick-name, "Essex calves," an appellation which is sometimes, but most undeservedly, applied to the people of Essex.

It is not generally known that the "Bow" china works were the earliest English porcelain works in Great Britain. Essex can, therefore, claim the honour of being the cradle of this industry. The origin of the factory is involved in obscurity, but there is sufficient evidence to show that it existed in the year 1744. The works stood "on the Essex side of the river Lea, not far from Bow Bridge, in that part of the parish of West Ham known as Stratford Langthorne."

Lysons, writing in 1796 of Stratford-le-Bow, says: "The celebrated manufactory of china, which

took its name from this place, was carried on on the other (that is Essex) side of the river Lea." This statement is confirmed by the discovery of the site of the factory in the year 1867. The cutting of a sewer brought to light a large number of fragments of china, plaster moulds, and other materials, which were carefully collected by Messrs. Bell and Black, whose match factory then occupied the site.

At the present time the site is occupied by Messrs. Jolly and Co., sack and bag makers, nearly opposite Marshgate Lane, High Street, Stratford. A row of houses in the neighbourhood was forty years ago still called "China Row." Why, in these circumstances, the works should be known as "Bow" works, can only be explained by the fact that the name of Stratford-le-Bow was in former days often confounded with Stratford-atte-Bow, the present Bow.

When the works were closed owing to financial difficulties, they were sold (1775) to Mr. Duesbury, who pulled down the kilns and removed the models and moulds to Derby. In the British Museum is a fine collection of Bow China. Among the specimens is a punch-bowl, which has a label attached to it with the following inscription: "This bowl was made at the Bow China Manufactory at Stratford-le-Bow, in Essex, about the year 1760, and painted there by me, Thomas Craft." In the South Kensington Museum is likewise a Collection of Bow China, which was presented to it by Lady Charlotte Schreiber.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.

SHAKESPEARE.

STRATFORD (*continued*).

Fifty years ago or even less the neighbourhood of Stratford abounded in fields and country lanes. All along the Leytonstone road there were farms on both sides, interrupted only by a few cottages. Turning down Angel Lane, you soon entered upon a country road, running between high banks topped with hedges. Now the fields are gone, and most of the land has gone into the hands of building societies or speculative builders.

Numerous cottages and private villas have been erected on all sides to meet the demands of the ever-growing population, forming additional proof that Stratford has become a prosperous, thriving town. Great changes have taken place in modern times, and many improvements have been made.

In its immediate neighbourhood numerous manufacturing establishments, chemical works, and other factories have sprung up. A large market for vegetables, fruits, roots, hay and straw, has

been constructed close to the Stratford Bridge Station, for the development of the trade in vegetables from the Eastern Counties. In short, the quiet country town of ancient days has now become a teeming hive of commerce and industry.

There was no railway in Essex until 1839, when the railway between London and Romford was opened. Now there are at least a dozen stations in the Borough of West Ham alone. The central station is at Stratford, where the two lines of the Great Eastern Railway diverge, leading respectively to Cambridge and Colchester. There are also branch lines to North Woolwich and to Barking.

How enormous the traffic at the present time is, may be gathered from the fact that no less than 1,900 trains pass through Stratford daily during the summer months, and 920 during the winter. Adjacent to the main station the Company has established its chief factory for making carriages, engines, and rolling stock. The factory, with its various yards, covers a large extent of ground, and gives employment to upwards of 5,000 hands.

One of the chief buildings in Stratford is the Town Hall, situate in the Broadway. It is a handsome structure of stone and brick in the Italian style, ornamented with various figures and groups of statuary, illustrative of the arts and sciences, agriculture, and commerce, and surmounted by a tower, 100 feet in height.



The lower portion of the building consists of a large vestibule and commodious public offices, and has also a large room for the Town Council. On the first floor is a spacious hall for public meetings, richly and artistically decorated, which is acknowledged to be one of the finest in the vicinity of the Metropolis.



OLD BROADWAY, STRATFORD (SITE OF THE TOWN HALL).

The Town Hall was erected by the late Board of Health, and opened on July 7th, 1869. In 1885 extensive additions were made to the building. The



public hall was also greatly enlarged and re-decorated, and has now seating accommodation for 800 persons. Before the Town Hall was built the site was occupied by quaint and old-fashioned houses, which had to be removed for the new edifice.

The parish church of Stratford, which is dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, stands in the centre of the town, at a place where the main road from the east of London diverges towards Romford and Leytonstone. The church is built in the early English style, and consists of a chancel, nave, and aisles, with an embattled tower surmounted by a spire.

Built in 1834, it was at first a chapel of ease to the parish of West Ham. In 1859 it became a district church, and was constituted a vicarage in the year 1868. The living is in the gift of the Vicar of West Ham. The site on which the church stands, was formerly an unenclosed village green, covered with unsightly structures, a lock-up, a blacksmith's shop, and a cow-house.

In the church-yard stands the Martyrs' Memorial, reference to which has already been made in the 17th chapter. It was erected by public subscription "to perpetuate the principles of the Reformation, and to commemorate the deaths of eighteen Protestant martyrs burned in this neighbourhood for the pure faith of Jesus Christ."

It is a hexagonal structure of stone and terra-

cotta, raised on a solid pedestal. Each of its six sides is surmounted by a boldly projecting canopy, and above all rises a ribbed spire to the height of 65 feet. One of the sides contains a sculptured panel, reproducing a plate in "Fox's Martyrology," representing the burning of thirteen of these martyrs. The remaining sides bear inscriptions, including the names, ages, and social positions of the other five martyrs, who suffered death in Stratford.

Such a memorial is particularly needful in the midst of a busy and growing population like this in the east of London. It will remind thousands who pass and re-pass this busy suburb of the highest of all courage, to be true to God and to do right, come what may.

The western foreground of the Church is adorned by an obelisk of grey granite, measuring 42 feet from the base to the apex, and serving as a drinking fountain. It was erected in 1861, "in memory of Samuel Gurney by his fellow parishioners."

Amongst the celebrities whose names are connected with Stratford, may be noted George Edwards, an eminent naturalist, who was born at Stratford in 1693. His history of "Birds" raised his name as the greatest ornithologist who had ever appeared. After many years, and the most stupendous application, he completed in 1764 his

“Gleanings of Natural History.” Having arrived at his 70th year, he retired from public employment to a little house he had purchased at Plaistow. Here he died in 1773, and was buried in the churchyard of West Ham.

Stratford was also the native place of Sir Richard Jebb, who enjoyed a high professional reputation, and was appointed physician to King George III., who conferred upon him a baronetcy. He died in 1787, in the 58th year of his age, and was buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey.

Tom Hood, the humourist and poet, while living at Lake House, Wanstead, often visited Stratford to see his friend, the late Dr. Elliot, with whose family he was intimately acquainted. Lake House is an old fashioned mansion, which formerly was a banqueting, or summer house, connected with the famous old Wanstead House, in Wanstead Park. Here Hood lived for about two years, and wrote his only completed novel, “Tylney Hall,” for which the romantic scenery of the Park and neighbourhood furnished him with a suitable background. Here also his son Thomas was born in January, 1835. Lake House has recently been demolished, the beautiful trees surrounding it have been cut down, and it will not be long before the whole estate is covered with bricks and mortar.

In 1840, when he was in bad health, Tom Hood stayed for two months at Dr. Elliot's house, in

Vicarage Terrace, at the corner of Vicarage Lane. From there he wrote to his wife that he could see from his bedroom window "Shooters Hill" in Kent, and the smoke of steamers going up and down the Thames.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

Come forth into the light of things,  
 Let Nature be your Teacher.

WORDSWORTH.

## EPPING FOREST.

A brief account, showing how the Epping Forest was preserved as an open space for the use and enjoyment of the people, may not be out of place here. The rapid growth of towns and the awakening sense of the importance of protecting the public health, brought about an appreciation of the value of open spaces.

In April, 1871, Mr. Cowper Temple moved the following resolution in the House of Commons: "That it is the duty of the Government to preserve Epping Forest for the recreation and enjoyment of the people." In the course of his interesting speech, he said that the Corporation of the City of London had a Charter entitling the citizens of London to enjoy the forest.

The motion was strongly opposed by Mr. Robert Lowe, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who held the opinion "that Epping Forest belonged to the Lords of the Manors, and was vested in them to

do as they like with them.” Despite the most strenuous opposition the resolution was carried by a large majority.

Originally all Essex was a forest, until King Stephen (1135-54) began disforesting portions of it at a rapid pace, granting slices of it to troublesome foes or equally troublesome friends. This process of converting the Forest into ploughed land was continued by his successors for about one hundred and fifty years, despite the Charters of Henry I. and Richard I., which say “that the citizens shall have their grounds for hunting.”

The Norman Kings, as well as their predecessors and successors, were great hunters. William the Conqueror is said to have loved the deer as if he had been their father. He made the most stringent laws against trespassers. The punishment for killing a deer, boar, or hare was mutilation by tearing out the eyes of the offender. This law was renewed by Richard I., with the addition of further cruel mutilation, as lopping off the hand.

King John (1199-1216) carried his love of the forest—or rather, perhaps, of its venison—to a somewhat unreasonable extent. He actually had the fences thrown down, so that the deer might have free access to the neighbouring cornfields. No doubt very pleasant for the deer, but anything but pleasant for the poor farmers!

Vasts tracts of country were also depopulated, to create new forests, or to extend the limits of the old ones, and under the colour of Forest law the most cruel oppressions were exercised, which occasioned frequent disturbances. At length many of these hardships were removed by the Forest Charter, extorted by the Barons from Henry III. (1216-1272) with as much difficulty as the Magna Charta itself from his father, King John.

In accordance with this Charter perambulations were ordered to be made for the purpose of fixing the boundaries of the forest. The boundaries of the Epping Forest then extended from the river Lea on the west to the Romford road on the east, and to the north as far as Epping.

The severe old forest laws had long ceased to be much enforced. The strict exercise of the royal privileges of the forest had also gradually declined, until King Charles I. (1629-1649) attempted again to revive the old forest laws, and to extend the boundaries of all the Royal forests throughout the whole country. His object was to raise money by exacting large sums from those who held lands within the enlarged boundaries, and thus to obtain a revenue independent of Parliament. These attempts were, however, met with vigorous resistance, especially in the county of Essex. The result was that an Act was passed by the Long Parliament (1640-1644) which declared "that the boundaries of every forest shall be those commonly



known or reputed as such." Since the passing of that Act the old Forest laws practically ceased, and after the revolution of 1688 all offences against the Forest law became punishable by the common laws of the land.

But another evil, enclosures by the Lords of the Manor, steadily continued. In 1777 twelve thousand acres of forest land remained unenclosed; in 1793 this area had diminished to nine thousand, and in 1854 seven thousand acres only remained unenclosed. In 1871 this number was reduced to three thousand five hundred acres.

These continued illegal enclosures led, in 1871, to the institution of a suit in Chancery by the Corporation of the City of London. The Corporation had an ancient traditionary right, which afforded them sufficient legal ground for interference.

An Act of Parliament was passed, appointing a Commission to enquire and report on the various contending rights. As a result of the suit the Corporation was successful on every point, and enclosures made during the twenty years previous to the filing of the Bill in 1871, were declared illegal. In 1878, after prolonged negotiations, an Act of Parliament was passed without opposition, which finally settled the whole question.

The Epping Forest, then consisting of 5,530 acres, was thus preserved by the exertions of the

City Corporation at a cost of £257,000. Never was money better spent! It is, therefore, now no longer a Royal Forest, except that the Crown appoints the Ranger. The management of the forest is vested in a Committee, called the Epping Forest Committee, which is composed of twelve members of the City Corporation and four verderers, resident within the forest, to be elected by the Commoners. These are the residents living within the boundary of the forest, who had the right to pasture their cattle in the forest for eleven months in the year, besides the privilege of lopping wood.

On the 6th of May, 1882, the Forest was thrown open to the public by the late Queen Victoria. Her Most Gracious Majesty drove down to High Beech in state, and in the presence of a large assembly, dedicated the "Epping Forest to the enjoyment and recreation of the people for all time."

Further additions were made in later years, so that the forest now embraces 5,600 acres, containing much beautiful foliage and woodland scenery, as well as the only wild specimens of fallow deer in England. There are now only 125 fallow deer and 32 roe deer in the forest, which shows a large decrease on the numbers counted in the previous year. Deer are disappearing mysteriously from Epping Forest, there being 45 less than last year.

The fault is great in Man or Woman,  
 Who steals a goose from off a common.  
 But who can plead that man's excuse,  
 Who steals the Common from the Goose?

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

On Monday they began to hunt.—CHEVY CHASE.

## EASTER MONDAY CHASE IN EPPING FOREST.

The citizens of London have from immemorial time held certain rights in Epping Forest. One of these was derived from a privilege granted them by Henry III., in the year 1226, which accorded them free permission to hunt the Forest once every year, namely, on Easter Monday.

In ancient times this was celebrated by a grand hunt in state, led by the Lord Mayor and City Magistrates, who were followed by a large number of the principal burgesses.

The “Morning Herald,” of April 18th, 1786, gives the following amusing account of one of these hunts:—

“The jockeys—for the name of sportsmen belongeth not unto them—rode against one another and against the trees, broke their skulls, and dirtied their clothes. They were of various descriptions, some on horses, some on asses, some on coaches, some on whiskies (light carriages), and some on chaise carts. The hunt, conducted in the usual style, was little better than a drag round the woods.

“The stag was indeed seen, but never caught. The booted jack-a-dandies were, however, quite satisfied. They brought some bits of skin in their

pockets, and talked at the porter-house of the excellence of the sport and the immense hard riding from one public-house to another, until they came back with their tired hacks, or broken knees, to the respective stables from where they were hired."

This common hunt of the London citizens riding on horseback, and hunting with my Lord Mayor's hounds, is ridiculed in an old ballad, called "The London Customs," published (1719) in a collection of songs, entitled "Pills to purge Melancholy," from which the following stanzas are quoted:—

"Next once a year into Essex a hunting they go,  
To see 'em pass along, O! 'tis a most pretty show.  
Through Cheapside and Fenchurch Street, and so to Aldgate  
pump,  
Each man with 's spurs in 's horses sides and his back-sword  
'cross his rump.  
My Lord he takes a staff in hand to beat the bushes o'er,  
I must confess it was a work he ne'er had done before,  
A creature bounceth from a bush, which made all to laugh;  
My Lord, he cried, a hare, a hare, but it prov'd an Essex  
calf.  
And when they had done their sport, they came to London,  
where they dwell,  
Their faces all so torn and scratch'd, their wives scarce  
knew them well,  
For 'twas a very great mercy, so many 'scaped alive,  
For of twenty saddles carried out, they brought again but  
five."

The following humorous sketch, taken from Hone's "Every-day Book," may be regarded as a fair example of the "Epping Hunt":—

"It was a cold, dry, and dusty morning. By nine o'clock the huntsmen were all abroad, trotting

down the road on nimble daisy-cutting nags and flowing-tailed chargers. Some were in coaches, some in gigs, some in cabs, and some in drags. Others footed the road, smothered by dust. Every gentleman was arrayed after his own peculiar taste in blue, brown, or black—in dress coats, long coats, short coats, great coats, and no coats. The ladies all wore a goose-skin underdress, in compliment to the cold north-easter.

“ By 12 o'clock there were not less than 3,000 merry people assembled at that far-famed spot called 'Fairmead Bottom.' The green sward was covered with ever moving crowds on foot, and the pollard oaks, which skirt the meadow on either side, were filled with men and boys.

“ But where is the stag all this while? One o'clock and no stag! Two o'clock and no stag! Presently at half-past two the stag cart was seen coming over the hill. Hundreds of horsemen and gigmen rushed valiantly forward to meet it, amidst such whooping and hallooing as made all the forest echo again.

“ Then amidst breathless silence the doors of the cart was thrown open, and out popped a strapping four-year old red buck, fat as a porker, with a chaplet of flowers round his neck, and a long blue and pink streamer depending from the summit of his branched horns.

“ He was received, on his alighting, with a

shout that seemed to shake the vault of heaven. Presently he caught a glimpse of the hounds and the huntsmen waiting for him, and in an instant off he bounded sideways through the rank. Knocking down and trampling all who crowded the path he chose to take, and dashing at once into the cover, he was out of sight before a man could say 'Jack Robinson.'

"Then might be seen gentlemen running about without their horses, and horses galloping along without their gentlemen—and hats out of number brushed off their owners' heads by the rude branches of the trees—and everybody asking which way the stag was gone, and nobody knowing anything about him. Nothing at all was to be seen, though more than enough to be heard, for every man, and every woman too, made as loud a noise as possible.

"Meanwhile the stag, followed by the keeper and about a couple of hounds, ran through the covers towards Woodford, and then turning back for a mile or two towards Chingford, was caught, nobody knows how, for everybody returned to town, except those who stopped to regale themselves and recount the glorious perils of the day.

"Thus ended the Easter Chase of 1826."

For many generations this hunt was conducted with due ceremony and much display by the Lord Mayor of London and the citizens of London, down to a recent date. The last hunt took place in 1858.

The head of the stag that was hunted on that day was presented to the City Corporation by Colonel George Palmer, in 1875, and may be seen in Guildhall.

A tablet fixed underneath bears the following inscription: "Head of the stag hunted in Epping Forest on Easter Monday, 1858, on which occasion the Right Honourable Lord Brougham was present with some of the Aldermen of the City of London."

After that the Easter chase gradually became a farcical show, and finally degenerated into a vulgar and ribald rout. Instead of the citizens of London it was a disorderly gathering of London roughs that travelled along the road through Stratford, Leytonstone, and Woodford into the Forest, making as much noise as possible. In 1882 it had become such a nuisance that a decree was issued, by which it was stopped.

Thus the Easter chase, having lingered among the relics of the ancient sports, has now become a thing of the past.

The connexion of the civic authorities with the Epping Hunt has been seized upon by Tom Hood. While living at Lake House, Wanstead, he wrote a poem, entitled "The Epping Hunt," in which he gives a ludicrous account of the adventures of a Mr. John Huggins, a London tradesman, "as bold a man as trade did ever know."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

'Tis Time that changeth everything.

CHAUCER.

## FOREST GATE.

In bygone days the aspect of the Romford Road was very different from what it is at the present day. There were not many buildings on either side of the road, since from "the Green" could be seen a mansion at Forest Gate, called "Woodgrange," which Norden, in his survey of Essex (1595) mentions among his list of "Houses having special names." The road seems to have led from Stratford to Ilford, passing scarcely any buildings, with the exception of two wayside inns, and to have formed the southern boundary of the Forest, as it had been in the time of Edward I.

Forest Gate lies to the north of the Romford Road, and stretches away to Wanstead Flats. Besides its rustic peace and seclusion, at no great distance from London, it possessed the additional attraction of the proximity of the Forest. Within the memory of living men, it was still a small and insignificant hamlet, not even worthy of being noticed in county maps or directories. Its whole population, including Upton, did not amount to more than 500 souls.



Forest Gate derives its name from a gate, which formerly stood in the Woodgrange Road, nearly opposite the "Eagle and Child" public-house. This "Gate of the forest" was put there by the Lord of the Manor for the purpose of preventing the cattle straying from the forest into the high road. It was attended by an old married couple, for whom a cottage was built.

It never was a toll-gate, and when Forest Gate began to be built over, and there was no longer any use for it, it was put back against the cottage, until it decayed and fell to pieces. In 1881 both the cottage and the post, to which the gate was attached, were removed, and no trace is left of either.

Time has here, as elsewhere, wrought many changes during the last fifty years. The open fields and shady lanes have vanished. The whole of the land and the market gardens, extending from Hamfrith Road to Manor Park, which not many years ago provided the London markets with all kinds of roots and greens and other agricultural produce, are now covered with dwelling houses.

With the growth of the population it became a matter of necessity to provide the means of public worship. Hence the ecclesiastical parish of Emmanuel was formed, in 1852, from portions of East and West Ham. Emmanuel Church occupies a commanding position in the main road at the

junction of four crossings. It is of Gothic design and consists of chancel, nave, and aisle. The roof is surmounted by a belfry and tower of about 100 feet high. The living is alternatively in the gift of the Vicars of East and West Ham.

Besides Emmanuel Church several other churches of various denominations have been built within recent years, testifying to the fact that vigorous efforts have been made, both on the part of the Established Church and of the Non-Conformists, to cope with the increase of the population, and to provide suitable places for public worship.

The only railway station consisted originally of a small wooden structure, with an entrance in Forest Lane. Subsequently a small brick station was erected, but with the rapid development of the locality it was found necessary to replace it by the present structure, which seems sufficient to meet all future requirements.

Before the West Ham School Board was established in 1871, the only schools that existed in Forest Gate, whose population had at that time risen to 7,127, were a Dame School and the National School in Woodgrange Road, at the corner of Forest Street, now demolished. Both schools did not, probably, accommodate more than 200 children.

Since then great educational progress has been made. There are at the present time four Board -

or as they are now termed—Council Schools, providing accommodation for 4,513 children.

There is also a music school, known as the Metropolitan Academy of Music. It was founded in 1885 by the late Mr. Harding Bonner, and has steadily grown with such increasing success, that branch establishments have been formed at Ilford, Leytonstone, and Southend. The College has a staff of 64 teachers and about 1,200 students.

The building is situate in Earldam Grove, and was originally (1879) intended for the Sol-fa College. With the rapid growth of the school the old building was found much too limited in space. An additional large and magnificent Hall has within recent years been built, which can accommodate 500 people. During the twenty years of its existence the school has done excellent work by encouraging the study and culture of music.



## CHAPTER XXX.

This is the curse of every evil deed,  
That, propagating still, it brings forth evil.

SCHILLER.

## A FOUL DEED OF TREACHERY.

We must now return to an earlier date in our history, when amongst our lanes, near the high road between Stratford and Ilford, a foul deed of treachery was perpetrated by Richard II. on his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, on a summer's night in the year 1397. The Duke was residing with his wife and children at the castle of Pleshey, near Chelmsford. Trained amongst the warriors of his father's (Edward III.) court and camp, he had little sympathy with his royal nephew's weaker qualities. He saw with contempt the King's effeminate and luxurious habits, and was also opposed to his marriage with a French Princess.

Himself rough and blunt in manners, bold in speech, and temperate in habit, the Duke became the leader of the war-party. He was especially beloved by the citizens of London, who flocked to Pleshey to consult him about their grievances. The King's jealousy being excited, he resolved to remove his uncle from his path. He took into his counsel

Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, an unscrupulous and ambitious man, and gave him most minute directions how to proceed. Mowbray is said to have kept the secret even from those who were employed in the execution of the orders he had received.

Leaving the Queen at Eltham, in Kent, the King, under the pretence of hunting, went to his country retreat of Havering-atte-Bower, near Romford. From here he rode, as if on a friendly visit, with few attendants to Pleshey, a distance of about twenty miles. His arrival was so sudden that no one knew of it, until the porter at the gate cried out "Here is the King." The Duke and the Duchess with their children went out with great respect to meet him in the court of the castle.

It being five o'clock, the Duke had already supped. The King entered the hall, and then an apartment where the table was re-laid for him. Then, with fair words upon his lips and the treacherous smile of friendly confidence on his face, he decoyed his uncle to the grasp of the murderer. "Good Uncle," said he, "order five or six of your horses to be saddled; you must go at once with me to London, for to-morrow I am to meet the Londoners, and we shall find there my uncles of York and Lancaster without fail, and I mean to take your opinion on a petition they are to present to me."

The Duke, suspecting no harm, obeyed forthwith, though he was ill. They rode hard, for the King was in haste to get to London, and all the way conversed familiarly with the Duke. They avoided Brentwood and the other towns, and arrived between 10 and 11 o'clock at night at a lane near Stratford. Here Mowbray lay in ambush with a troop of men and horses, and sprang upon the Duke, saying: "I arrest you by the King's orders."

The King pressed on at full speed, deaf to the cries of his uncle Gloucester, who panic-struck and aware of his danger, called upon him aloud for help and deliverance. Nor did Richard slacken his pace until he arrived at the Tower of London, where he passed the night. Meanwhile, the Duke was hurried "down the lane that led from the main road to the Thames," where he was forced into a boat, and conveyed to Calais.

Here he was smothered beneath a feather-bed by ruffians engaged for the purpose by the order of the King, in September, 1397. It was given out that he had died of apoplexy. His body was brought to Pleshey, and buried in the Church which he had built, but it was afterwards removed to Westminster Abbey.

The details of the event, as related by various historians, differ considerably, but the main facts are not in doubt. They constitute one of the most despicable pages in English history.

It is, of course, impossible to identify with absolute certainty, the lane down which the unfortunate Duke was hurried to the river. It has been conjectured that it was the "Green Lane," which divides the two parishes of East and West Ham, now called "Green Street."

This is the nearest lane to Stratford that leads direct from the high road to the Thames, without passing through either village or hamlet. Its antiquity is marked by the ancient Green Street House, locally known as "Anne Boleyn's Castle," which abuts on it.

Mowbray's ambush would naturally be laid in a lonely place, or dark covert, and not in the village of Stratford. Avoiding West Ham and all hamlets, where the cries of the prisoner might be heard, he would surely select a lonely and direct way to the river, like the old "Green Lane."



## CHAPTER XXXI.

The rolling seasons pass away,  
 And Time untiring, waves his wing,  
 Whilst honour's laurels ne'er decay  
 But bloom in fresh unfading spring.

BYRON.

## UPTON.

At what time the pretty rural village of Upton first sprang into being, and had its distinctive name of "Upton," has not yet been ascertained. Near Emmanuel Church, at the point where Upton Lane joins the high road, there stood some fifty years ago an old oak tree of a very rare species. From this tree the lane in olden times took its name of "One Tree Lane."

Several old mansions bordered on this rustic lane, more or less surrounded by pretty gardens, fields, and pleasure grounds. But the building operations of recent years have completely swallowed up the verdant fields. The noble trees, by which the lane was bounded on either side, have been ruthlessly cut down, and the private mansions, with their pretty lawns, shrubberies, and gardens have been swept away to make room for long rows of shops and dwelling houses. A new neighbourhood has started into being as if by magic,



and what not many years ago was a little village has now developed into a populous town.

Following the somewhat winding lane which leads to Upton Cross and Plaistow, we presently come to the ancient hostelry, known as the "Spotted Dog." Time has dealt with it more kindly than



THE "SPOTTED DOG."

with numerous other hostelries, which have lost so much of their old world rustic charm. Though it has no great history of its own, it has at least played some part in it.

Here existed until recently, when the house

was restored, the parlour in which the merchants of the City of London held their exchange during the destructive plague which visited London in the beginning of the reign of James I. In commemoration of it, a painting of the City Arms, bearing the date 1603, is still preserved on a wall in the entrance hall. This plague is said to have lasted eight years in London, and to have carried off 38,000 people.

A little further on is a handsome old mansion, called "Upton House," which is now the vicarage of St. Peter's Church. It stands opposite West Ham Park, of which it commands a fine view. In this house Joseph Lister, the eminent surgeon, was born in the year 1827.

His name is amongst the most glorious on the roll-call of England's great men. By his discovery of the antiseptic treatment of wounds and surgical operations, thousands of lives have been saved. The antiseptic system consists essentially in the minutest care to prevent the access of germs to wounds, or to endeavour to destroy them when they have already got there. In recognition of his valuable services to the human race, Joseph Lister was made Baronet in 1883, and raised to the Peerage in 1897.

Another large mansion, formerly known as "Ham House," was the hospitable residence of Mr. Samuel Gurney, the well-known philanthropist, to whose memory a drinking fountain was erected in



HAM HOUSE IN 1850, THE RESIDENCE OF MR. SAMUEL GURNEY.

Stratford Broadway. Surrounded by a beautiful park, the present West Ham Park, the house stood at a short distance from the Upton Lane entrance to the Park. It was interesting only from its associations and the many eminent persons, both native and foreign, who visited it during Mr. Gurney's life.

The site of the old mansion, which was pulled down in 1872, is indicated by a curiously shaped drinking fountain, formed of huge stones piled one upon the other, and bearing the following inscription: "This fountain is erected on the site of Ham

House, for many years the residence of Samuel and Elizabeth Gurney and their family, 1876.”

West Ham Park, comprising about 80 acres, is well timbered and contains some fine trees and a beautiful flower garden. In 1762 it belonged to Dr. Fothergill, a botanist and eminent physician.



HAM HOUSE IN 1766, THE RESIDENCE OF DR. FOTHERGILL.

Here he had a garden containing 3,400 distinct species of plants and trees, procured from every part of the habitable globe. Many of the trees, planted by him 150 years ago, are still living.

It was in the beginning of the last century that Mr. Samuel Gurney became the owner of the Park. His grandson, Mr. John Gurney, banker, of Norwich, offered it as a public recreation ground for

its estimated value of £25,000, of which he, however, generously gave £10,000. The Corporation of the City of London voted a further £10,000, and the remaining £5,000 of the required sum was made up by donations and subscriptions. A licence was obtained from the Crown, allowing the City Corporation to hold the Park for ever in trust for the people.

As the City Corporation volunteered to maintain the Park, not one shilling of expense, either directly or indirectly, is borne by the locality. The Park is under the control of a Committee of fifteen persons, eight of whom are nominated by the City Corporation, four by the Gurney family, and three by the local authorities.

The opening of the Park took place on the 20th July, 1874, and will ever be remembered by those who witnessed it. The appearance of the Lord Mayor of London, with the rest of the civic dignitaries, was greeted by thousands of children, who were ranged on both sides of the road, from the entrance of the Park in the Portway, to the pavilion, where the opening ceremony was held.

No sooner was the Park declared free and open for all time, at four o'clock in the afternoon, than a great hurrah went up from all those within hearing, which was echoed and re-echoed by the thousands without. It is impossible to overrate the immense benefit which, by the preservation of West Ham Park, has been conferred upon this



populous district, whose numerous factories send forth their noxious effluvia, and where the streets swarm with children.

Every thoughtful and philanthropic man will heartily concur in the sentiment of the following sentence, extracted from a pamphlet, which was circulated amongst the visitors on the day of the opening: "That it seems in the order of things that West Ham Park, so long the residence of two such people as the late Samuel Gurney and Elizabeth Fry, whose names were for a long period household words for deeds of pure philanthropy, should be dedicated for ever to the healthful enjoyment of all classes of the people, and thus be preserved as a blessing for all time."

Before concluding this chapter, it only remains to mention that adjoining the Ham House grounds, and forming a distinct—as yet private—part of the Park, stands in grounds of its own, another mansion, known by the name of "The Cedars." Although formerly called "Upton Lane House," it never stood in Upton Lane, but in the Portway. It is now the headquarters of the 6th Battalion Essex Regiment.

For the last sixteen years (1829-45) of her life, it was the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, sister of Mr. Samuel Gurney. Few of her own sex stand so eminent for their works of philanthropy, and her name will ever remain cherished in the hearts of



THE CEDARS.

[PHOTO—W. E. WRIGHT.]

the English people for her efforts to relieve the condition of the female prisoners in Newgate.

It was at this house that Mrs. Elizabeth Fry had the honour of receiving Frederic William IV., King of Prussia, in January, 1842, while he was staying in England to attend the christening of the infant Prince of Wales, our present King Edward VII. Although the visit was considered strictly private, and every endeavour was made to keep it so, the road from West Ham to "The Cedars" was crowded with people and carriages. The Church bells were ringing, flags flying from the steeple, and the people shouting as the King passed by. The whole village presented a scene such as the Portway will probably never see again.

## CHAPTER XXXII

Suburban villas, highway-side retreats,  
That dread th' encroachment of our growing streets.

COWPER.

## PLAISTOW.

The hamlet or ward of the parish of West Ham, known as Plaistow, derives its name from Hugh de Plaiz, in ancient times the feudal Lord of the whole district, and signifies the "stow" or "seat" of de Plaiz. It was not until early in the 16th century that Plaistow became a distinct village. It retained its rural character for centuries, and it is only within comparatively recent years that it has almost suddenly grown into a populous town. Its boundary on the west is formed by the river Lea, once bright and sparkling, and abounding in fish—now foul with the drainage of factories of all kinds.

Looking at the bustling place of to-day, one can scarcely picture to oneself that barely fifty years ago it was still an obscure little agricultural village of "several genteel houses," inhabited by the gentry and wealthy City merchants, many of whom kept their own carriages. Most of these interesting old residences have one by one been pulled down, and



their sites covered with rows of one-storeyed little tenements, while the solitary marshlands, which stretched as far as the Thames, and served only for grazing purposes, have been converted into mighty docks, workshops, and factories.

If living to an old age is a proof of healthy climate, Plaistow must indeed, notwithstanding its close proximity to the marshes, have enjoyed a good reputation for its healthy air. The Rev. R. W. B. Marsh, who was Incumbent and Vicar of the Parish Church from 1842-1884, says that he buried five centenarians. He also tells a tale of one of his parishioners complaining that her daughter was sitting in her chair, and not helping in the housework. The daughter was eighty years old, while the mother was one hundred and two.

Of another woman, a field worker, nearly one hundred years old, he relates that she was once attacked in a terribly lonely lane by two men, who tried to deprive her of her pension-money, which she had been to receive at Bethnal Green. She raised her fist and knocked them both down, and arrived safely home. When asked by the father of Mr. Marsh if she was not afraid in her old age, she indignantly answered: "Afeard of them,—do you think I was going to give up my money to those whipper-snappers?" It would appear that in respect of muscle and sinew, the women of those days were somewhat superior to those of the present day.

The time when the cattle were peacefully grazing in the fields, and languidly fattening themselves for the London market, is past and gone. We are told that in the year 1720 an ox, weighing 263 stone, was sold in Leadenhall Market for one hundred guineas, "at 12 pence a pound, every bit and bone of him." He was fed in what is still called "Old Tun Marsh," and was five years and nine months old when killed. It would certainly be a novelty now to see a fat bullock in Plaistow.

The agricultural labourer of old, the grazier and marsh man, have vanished out of sight to make room for the city clerk, the artisan, and the dock labourer. There are people still living who remember the time when oxen were not only used for ploughing, but also for drawing waggons; and when the streets were lined with large and magnificent elm trees, planted more than 200 years ago.

The whole aspect of the locality has changed. What once was a green and open country has now become a busy place of industry, and gradually developed into a vast commercial and manufacturing suburb of the great Metropolis. The increase in its population, especially during the last fifty years, has been immense. At the beginning of the last century the whole population of the combined district Plaistow proper, Canning Town, and Silvertown - amounted to 1,069, and even as late as 1841, curiously enough, to exactly 1,841, while at the present day it is estimated at about 150,000.

No doubt the formation of the Victoria and Royal Albert Docks—opened in 1855 and 1880 respectively—the opening of the London and Tilbury railway in 1858, as well as the introduction of various industries, have caused a great influx of immigrants, and helped the rapid growth of this district of “London-over-the-Border.”

In passing along the Barking road, with its electric cars and lively traffic, one can hardly imagine that in 1845 there were only two houses between the “Abbey Arms” public-house and the Iron Bridge at Poplar. One of these was the “Half-way House Inn,” and the other—strange to say!—a Preparatory School for young ladies. The road was even at that time so deserted that a lady, still living at Plaistow, once lost her watch near the Iron Bridge, but found it untouched, when on reaching home she discovered her loss and went back to look for it.

As the road passed across the marshes, and had no solid foundation, it was generally in a very bad and rotten state, and the mud often ankle-deep. There is a tradition that the late Rev. R. W. B. Marsh, on a wintry night, when on his way to baptise a dying child, lost his shoes. For some time he was unaware of his loss—so caked and weighted were his feet with the mud which he had unavoidably collected on them.

A hundred years ago there was only one con-

stable in Plaistow, who lived in North Street, near St. Mary's Church. He wore no uniform, but he was armed with a pair of pistols, which were, perhaps, quite as effective a weapon as the truncheon of the present policeman.

In the general election of 1768 only four persons in Plaistow had a Parliamentary vote, and they had to walk the whole way to Chelmsford to record it. Times have greatly improved, for nowadays the voters are fetched in carriages and motor-cars to the different polling stations. As for going to town, before the London and Tilbury Railway was opened, the only conveyance was a daily coach, the fare of which was three shillings inside and two shillings outside. Wheeled conveyances were scarce, horseback and walking being practically the chief means of communication.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

Let's live with that small pittance we have;  
 Who covets more, is evermore a slave.

HERRICK.

PLAISTOW (*continued*).

The history of Plaistow recalls to mind many associations pertaining to earlier days. Tradition says that it was here that the Abbot and Monks, after the dissolution of West Ham Abbey, took refuge and lived out the remainder of their lives, subsisting on the allowance granted them by the Crown. There was an ancient mansion—called Hyde House—which formed part of their former possessions. It stood nearly opposite the “Black Lion Inn,” on the south side of High Street, then known as Cordwainer Street, the place having been famous for cordwainers. A cordwainer is a worker in Spanish (Cordovan) leather—a shoemaker. It is, therefore, very probable that in times gone by a village industry of bootmaking was carried on there.

The Rev. Daniel Lysons, in his “Environs of London” (1796), states that Hyde House was said to have been inhabited by the monks of Stratford. In a manuscript (still extant) of its last occupant,



HYDE HOUSE, PLAISTOW.

Mr. John James, who in 1753 was bailiff of the Lord of the Manor, it is recorded that over the mantelpiece in the best parlour was written in "golding" letters: "Prosperity and adversity. Life and death. Poverty and riches come all of the Lord." This would lead one to suppose that the house was at one time occupied by a religious body, and that it was to this house that the monks of West Ham Abbey were permitted to retire.

The house has long since disappeared, but there still remain considerable portions of old brick walls, which appear to have surrounded an extensive enclosure. To the south of the house, at the back of the present Wesleyan Chapel, there stood within

recent years a large barn, built over a buttressed door-arch. This ancient gateway is confidently asserted to have been the entrance into the Monks' premises from a lane, by which they used to pass into the village. Over this gate was the date 1579, and the following inscription: "Christ is the gate to everlasting life." The date seems late, since



PORCHGATE OF MONKS' REFUGE AT PLAISTOW.

the Abbey was dissolved in 1539, but it is not improbable that the monks continued to linger there till that or even beyond that date.

The chief thoroughfare of Plaistow is Balaam Street, a long and narrow street leading towards the Thames. It boasted in former days several handsome family mansions, but it is long since that Plaistow was a fashionable residence. In consequence of the increased traffic, and in order to pro-



vide for the tramway, the street has been considerably widened and improved.

At the entrance of Balaam Street stands the "Coach and Horses" public-house, where the notorious highwayman, Dick Turpin, is supposed to have commenced his career of vice and low villainy. Close by stood a house in which the unfortunate Dr. Dodd resided, of whom mention has been made in a former chapter.

Chesterton House, now occupied by Dr. A. Kennedy, was in the beginning of the last century the residence of Luke Howard, founder of the chemical business at Stratford, now carried on by his descendants. His large work on the "Climate of London" has given him his scientific fame. He died in 1864.

Another mansion worthy of notice is Plaistow Hall, now in the occupation of Dr. Buksh. In the garden is a mulberry tree, which is one of the finest and oldest in the neighbourhood, and said to have been planted by the royal hand of Henry VIII.

Further down Balaam Street, on the right hand side, stands Brunswick Cottage, part of an old-fashioned dwelling, with a weeping ash in front of it. Here the illustrious writer and statesman, Edmund Burke, lived for a short time—1759-61. Dr. Johnson considered him the greatest man in England, and Lord Macaulay extols him as "that great

master of eloquence, superior to every orator, ancient or modern."

Crossing the Barking Road and going down New Barn Street, there still stands on the left hand side a large mansion, called Cumberland House. It derives its name from having been in the possession of Henry, Duke of Cumberland, brother of King George III. Here he kept his racing stud, and often used to pass the night here, attended by only one servant.

The Royal Duke was also an amateur agriculturalist. His farm carts used in those days to be frequently seen about Plaistow, with the City arms and his name upon them. As he was a citizen of London, he had a right to use the City arms, which freed them from certain tolls.

Nor is this the only instance of Royal horses being kept on Plaistow marshes. King George IV., when Prince of Wales, used to turn out his colts there, while the grooms in charge of them took up their quarters at the "Abbey Arms" public-house. This house had in former years a sign-post standing in front of it, with the arms of the West Ham Abbey upon it: "Three golden chevrons of Montfichet with the Abbot's crozier across."

Cumberland House is entirely unaltered. In the farmyard stands a very ancient tithe barn, said to be the largest in Essex. The interior of it is

arched after the manner of a cathedral. Its beams are made of horse chestnut, a wood which the wire-worm will not touch. Both the barn and the above-named public-house are obviously traces of Abbey lands and influence.

The barn was, no doubt, used for tenants to assemble on rent and tithe days, and for storing the produce of the Abbey lands. Only a portion of the old barn remains, which is covered with corrugated iron. The effect, from an antiquarian point of view, is, of course, completely spoiled. The property now belongs to the Coopers' Company.

Near St. Mary's Schools the present Pelly Road branches off into St. Mary's Road, which leads past the Church, and was formerly known by the name of Palsy Lane. On the old maps it is called Purls Hill Lane, of which the name Palsy was probably a corruption. The other street, called North Street, leads to an open space, which in days long passed was covered with grass, and called "the Green." Here the men used to play at skittles and quoits, and the boys at trap and ball.

This open space gradually narrows up into what is called "Greengate Street," until it reaches the Greengate tavern, where, intersected by the Barking Road, it leads into the marshes under the name of Prince Regent's Lane. This lane is probably so named after the Prince, who was created Regent in 1811, before his accession to the throne as George IV., in 1820.

On the right hand side of Greengate Street may still be seen an iron gate, surmounted by a ducal coronet, wrought in iron. It was the entrance gate to an old mansion, called "Essex House," which is said to have been the residence of the Duke of Somerset, who was appointed Protector during the minority of King Edward VI. (1547-53). Afterwards it was the residence of an Earl of Essex, from whom it derived its name.

It was a large and massive building, and contained sixty rooms, besides a fine and spacious hall with a magnificent staircase and banisters of great beauty. Later on it was successively a school and a private mad-house.

The old mansion was pulled down in 1836 by its then owner, Mr. Charles Curtis, who out of the material erected the present Essex Lodge, which serves as a lodge to the new Recreation Ground. Although not so extensive as some of the other Parks in the Borough, it is in other respects equal to any of its fellows. The shrubs and flower-beds are tastily arranged, and afford great enjoyment to the inhabitants, who thoroughly appreciate the neat condition in which they are kept.

A portion of the land, which in former days was attached to Essex House, has been utilised by the West Ham Corporation for an extensive and complete range of tramway buildings and car-sheds.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

She rests in God's peace; and her memory stirs  
 The air of earth as with an angel's wings,  
 And warms and moves the hearts of men like hers.

J. G. WHITTIER.

PLAISTOW (*continued*).

The history of Plaistow would not be complete without some account, however brief, of the religious life and work which is being carried on in it. A century ago the only places of public worship were the "Independent Chapel" in North Street, built in 1807, now adapted to business purposes in connexion with the printing works of Messrs. Curwen and Sons, Ltd., and the "Friends' Meeting House," built in 1819, now forming part of the Council School, in North Street.

It was in this Meeting House that Mrs. Elizabeth Fry delivered almost her last ministerial address, urging with increased fervour and affection the object of philanthropy and Christian benevolence, to which her life had been devoted. Here also the Gurneys and Howards and Barclays were regular worshippers. Mrs. Fry died in the year 1845, and was buried in the quiet Friends' burying ground at Barking. Her humble tomb may still

be seen in the little green enclosure, with its lilacs and laburnums, surrounded by the graves of many of her relatives.

It is worthy of note that the stone columns which form the portico of one part of the North Street Schools are from Wanstead House. This mansion was one of the noblest, not only in the vicinity of London, but in the whole kingdom. When it was pulled down, in 1822, the Quakers of Plaistow bought those Doric columns to adorn their humble place of worship.

In 1830 the church of St. Mary was erected on a site given by the late Sir John Henry Pelly. This little church was a hideous building, cold and unattractive. In course of time it became so dilapidated that the present vicar, the Rev. T. Given-Wilson, resolved to demolish it, and to build a new one on its site. This is a noble and imposing structure, and handsomely equipped with all that is necessary to divine worship. The living is in the gift of the Vicar of West Ham.

In 1870 St. Andrew's Church, in the Barking Road, was consecrated, and since then several other district churches have been built with parishes assigned to them. The Baptists, Wesleyans, Methodists, and other Non-Conformist bodies have also places of worship here. One of the most imposing is the Congregational Church in Balaam Street. In short, there is no lack of Christian activity, and

great efforts are constantly being made to extend among a poor and hard-working population a knowledge of the Gospel of truth.

Great progress has also been made in the erection of Mission Churches and Mission Halls, which, with many other charitable agencies, give abundant proof of much real good work being carried on in the district.

It is also interesting to note the great educational changes that have taken place during the last forty years. What the school accommodation was during the early part of the last century has already been mentioned in a previous chapter.

About 1840 the North Street Schools were established, and in 1866 the new schools in Balaam Street were built by public subscription. When the West Ham School Board was formed in 1871, both these schools passed simultaneously under the control of the Board and of the Government. During its existence the late School Board established six schools in the Plaistow Ward alone, providing accommodation for nearly 9,000 children.

The Plaistow public library, situate in the Broadway, was opened in 1903. Though the building is but one storey high, it has a striking appearance, with its large dome. It consists of one large room with the lending department, which is separated from the news and magazines department by a



glazed screen, so that perfect supervision is obtained from one central point over all departments.

In concluding this account of Plaistow, it should not be left unnoticed that though flat and unattractive, this locality has inspired the poets. Jeremiah Dummer, who died 1739, and lies buried in West Ham Church, sings the praises of Plaistow in a poem, from which the following lines are quoted :

“Thy yellow harvest and thy healthy air  
 Invite my lays. Attend ye sylvan maids,  
 Lay by your work and seek the cooling shades.  
 Arcadia's fields or Candia's lovely plains,  
 Or Tyber's meads describ'd in softest strains,  
 Can equal thee in anything but song,  
 'Tis from their poets they exist so long.  
 And were my heart inspir'd with equal flame,  
 Our village justly should excel their fame.  
 What tho' our hills no azure summits crowned,  
 With bearded grain the fertile plains abound.  
 Houses thick interspers'd and trees appear,  
 Whose lofty tops ascend the ambient air.  
 A chequer'd land-skip each parterre displays,  
 Admitting all the genial sun's bright rays.  
 Here flowers rise; in gayest dress the rose,  
 Opening each morn, doth sweet perfume disclose,  
 With white the snowdrop, hyacinth with blue,  
 Jonquil with yellow. Iris' varied hue  
 Kind nature decks. Why should I more? the field  
 Unask'd a thousand different beauties yield.  
 Pomona here her richest blessings pours,  
 And from each tree descend the empurpl'd show'rs.  
 Kind Ceres here repays the farmer's toils,  
 With plenteous harvest every furrow smiles;  
 Pan here his flocks to flow'ry herbage leads,  
 And while they're feeding, tunes his sevenfold reeds.”

Another poet, who lived at Plaistow, was Aaron Hill, whose tragedies and poems, though much neglected in later days, were well-known and admired by his contemporaries. Here he devoted himself to his study and garden, and wrote a heroic poem, called "the Fanciad." His last work was an adaption to the English stage of a tragedy by Voltaire, a distinguished French writer. He dedicated it to Lord Bolingbroke in the following lines, full of melancholy presage of his approaching end:

"Cover'd in fortune's shade I rest reclin'd,  
My griefs all silent, and my joys resign'd,  
With patient eye life's evening gleam survey,  
Nor shake th' out-hast'ning sands, nor bid them stay.  
Yet while from life my setting prospects fly,  
Fain would my mind's weak offspring shun to die;  
Fain would their hope some light through time explore  
The name's kind passport—when the man's no more."

Aaron Hill died in 1749, after enduring a twelve months' torment with great fortitude and resignation. He was buried in the same grave with his wife—a daughter of Edward Morris, of Stratford, and a lady of great merit and beauty—in the great cloister of Westminster Abbey.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

Things ill got had ever bad success.

SHAKESPEARE.

DICK TURPIN.

A notorious character, who for some time lived at Plaistow, was Dick Turpin, the noted highwayman, and for ten years the terror of this neighbourhood. He was born in 1704 at Hempstead, near Saffron Walden, in Essex, where his father kept the "Crown Inn." At an early age he was apprenticed to a butcher at Whitechapel, who discharged him for the brutality of his manners. He then came as servant to Farmer Giles, who lived in Richmond Street, Plaistow. After having been dismissed by him he married a young woman, Hester Palmer, of East Ham, where he afterwards lived.

He had not been married long before he took to the practice of stealing his neighbours' cattle, and cutting them up for sale. Having stolen two fat oxen, belonging to his old master, Farmer Giles, at Plaistow, a warrant for his apprehension was issued. He managed, however, to make his escape by jumping from a back-room window at the very moment

the officers entered the house. Not choosing to run any more such hazards, he went in search of other adventures, and connected himself with a gang of smugglers, operating between Plaistow and South-end. For a time he was successful.

But thrown out of this kind of business, he joined a gang of deer-stealers, whose depredations were principally committed in Epping Forest and the parks in its neighbourhood. This not succeeding to their expectations—the keepers having been strengthened in numbers—they determined, as a more profitable pursuit, to commence house-breaking.

Their exploits were generally performed at nightfall, whilst the inhabitants were still up. Their practice was to knock at the door, and when it was opened, to rush in and seize whatever they might deem worthy of their notice. They generally fixed on houses which they presumed to contain valuable property.

Having become aware that there was an old woman at Loughton, who was in possession of several hundred pounds, they agreed to rob her. They forced their way into the house, and blindfolded the poor old creature and her maid. Turpin then demanded what there was in the house, and the mistress hesitating to tell him, he threatened to set her on the kitchen fire if she did not make an immediate disclosure of her gold. Still, how-

ever, she declined to give the desired information, when the ruffians actually placed her on the burning coals. Here they held her, despite her agonised shrieks, until at last the tormenting pain compelled her to disclose her carefully concealed store of gold, and they, taking possession of over £400, made their escape.

It may be worth mentioning that part of the house in which Turpin performed this ungallant feat, still exists. It was formerly known by the name of "Thrapp's Hill Farm," and is now called "the Priors."

Some little time after, they agreed to rob the house of a farmer near Barking. They knocked at the door, but the people declined to open it, whereupon they broke it open. Having bound the farmer, his wife, his son-in-law, and the servant maid, they robbed the house of £700. Turpin was so delighted that he exclaimed: "Aye, this will do, if it would always be so."

At another time, from motive of revenge, they broke into the house of the Forest-keeper, named Mason, beat him to death, and ransacked the house, smashing the furniture, and carrying off one hundred and twenty guineas. On several occasions, when disappointed of expected plunder, they were guilty of the most horrible acts of cruelty and violence. All the gang paid for their crimes except Turpin, who contrived by superior strength and activity to escape.

Turpin now became a highwayman, attacking travellers, chiefly in Epping Forest. In this he was joined by a man named King. They dug a cave in a thicket near Loughton, on the eastern side of the forest, between the King's Oak and Loughton roads, large enough to conceal the two men and their horses. It was hidden by ferns and brambles, hazels and thorns, and so artfully contrived that they could see every person that travelled the road, while they themselves were hidden from the eye of the world.

Turpin's faithful spouse, who lived at Sewardstone, used to supply them with food, and sometimes stayed a week at a time in the cave. It is almost incredible that these two highwaymen lived here for several years. The excavation is still pointed out to the curious visitor as "Turpin's cave." A collection of pistols, swords, spurs, etc., found in the forest, and in some way or another connected with Turpin, may be seen at the "Wake Arms," an inn on the high road leading from Loughton to Epping.

At last a reward was offered by the Government for his arrest, which rose from £50 to £200. Soon after this proclamation had been issued, Dick Turpin, during one of his rides, fell in with a gentleman mounted on a thoroughbred horse, and putting his pistol to the gentleman's head, he invited him to exchange horses, as his own horse was

getting tired. No sooner had the gentleman reached home, than he found that the horse he had been riding was stolen from the Plaistow marshes, and that the saddle was also stolen. A few days later the innkeeper of the "Red Lion," at the corner of Whitechapel Road and Leman Street, recognised the thoroughbred which Turpin had with him, and tried to arrest him. There was a scuffle, in which Turpin accidentally shot his associate King instead of the landlord. Turpin effected his escape, but the loss of his friend caused him much pain and grief.

After this event, which occurred on the 3rd May, 1737, Turpin was searched for with bloodhounds by the huntsmen of a neighbouring gentleman. Perceiving them in his Loughton thicket, he climbed into a tree and saw the hounds passing under it. Harassed and worn by terror and hardships, he left Epping Forest, and was glad to escape into Lincolnshire, and ultimately into Yorkshire.

Here he took to horse-stealing under the name of Palmer, which was his wife's maiden name. But one day, in a foolish freak, he shot a valuable game cock. He was arrested, thrown into prison, and other charges having been brought against him, he was condemned to death. He ended his guilty career at York, where he was hanged on the 7th of April, 1739, when only in his 33rd year. He stood on the ladder of the gallows nearly half-an-hour in conversation with the executioner, before he leapt



from it with the noose round his neck, and after struggling for five minutes hung motionless and dead.

It is probably true, that at times Turpin would act with good feeling and profuse liberality to the poor and his companions, but there is no pretence for saying that he mingled chivalry with his crimes, or describing him as "a popular hero." In reality he was a brutal, unmitigated ruffian, and fully deserved his fate.

Notwithstanding the severity of the law, which consigned numbers of highwaymen to death for robberies, the roads still continued to be unsafe for a long period afterwards. Foot-pads infested most parts of the county. In 1765 we read of a robber being shot at Loughton by an armed guard, accompanying the hay carts returning from London. In the same year an Essex stage coach was stopped and robbed between Ilford and Stratford, and on the 22nd of January, 1793, the carriage of Mr. Alderman Palmer was stopped on the new Epping Road by a single highwayman, who carried off the Alderman's watch and fourteen guineas.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

Britannia needs no bulwarks,  
 No towers along the steep;  
 Her march is o'er the mountain-waves,  
 Her home is on the deep.

CAMPBELL.

## SOUTH WEST HAM.

The greater part of the marshes between Plaistow and the Thames has been absorbed by the three townships of Hallsville, Canning Town, and Silvertown. They form a populous district of the southern division of West Ham, and are respectively named after their former leading employers of labour.

The whole district is a collection of industries. There are iron shipbuilding yards, chemical factories, sugar refineries, creosote works, soap works, and oil mills, etc. All these factories employ thousands of working men, but the most important source of employment is derived from the docks and the various branches of business connected with shipping.

There are hardly any well-to-do people living in the district, as there is no attraction to keep those in residence who can afford to get away. It is

a purely working-class community, and since the docks attract far more men than can possibly be employed, the number of unskilled labourers keeps increasing year by year.

The Victoria Docks are the largest and finest docks of the Port of London, and in position the most easily accessible to the river. They are situated on the northern bank of the Thames, at a short distance eastward of Bow Creek, and cover an area of about 100 acres. They were formed in 1855, and are provided with the most perfect hydraulic and other appliances.

They contain upwards of a mile of wharfage accommodation and quay frontage, and present an interesting scene. Huge merchantmen and magnificent steamers send the imagination over the boundless ocean, and recall to mind the perils they have passed in struggling with the tempest and battling with the gale.

While excavating through a peat bog in the formation of these docks, a large quantity of hazel, oak, and yew trees, and other vegetable remains were found, which were more or less fossilised. From this it is evident that the marshes in this district were once forest land. Huge bones of a large whale were also found at a depth of fourteen feet below the surface of the soil.

With the increase of trade, it was found necessary to enlarge the Victoria Docks by an ex-

tension in an easterly direction. This was completed in 1880, at a cost of rather more than half-a-million pounds, and the combined docks were named "the Royal Albert and Victoria Docks."

These docks are the largest artificial sheet of water in the world, being nearly three miles long, with a water space of 185 acres, and seven miles of quay. There are stores for frozen meat, holding over 560,000 sheep, always maintained at a low temperature, and warehouses wherein is stored all the tobacco that comes to London — the stock being valued at nine million pounds. The whole of the dock district is encircled by railways, to facilitate the traffic in all directions.

Looking at the long rows of factories fronting the river, at the docks, and at the crowded streets of to-day, one can hardly realise that at the beginning of the last century there was but one single building, with a red roof, to be seen standing between Bow Creek and Barking Creek. It was vulgarly called the "Devil's House," probably a corruption of Duval's House. One can scarcely imagine for whose benefit it was erected, but we are told that it was an ale-house, and was much frequented by people coming from London.

One would think that the uncanny name of "Devil's House" would alone have sufficed to deter people from entering it, but then we must not forget

that, as Shakespeare says, "the Devil has power to assume a pleasing shape." It is a notorious fact that when he appears in the shape of ale, he has ever been, down to the present day, very pleasing and attractive to numbers of people. In later years the house became a mere shelter for marshmen, who tended cattle on the marshes. It was finally bought by the Royal Albert Docks' Company, who pulled it down when the docks were constructed.

It is also worth recording that on the river bank, where the entrance to the Victoria Docks now is, there stood within the memory of man a gibbet with ghastly corpses of so-called river-pirates hanging and rotting upon it, as a terror to evil-doers. These things can happily be no more, and let us hope that the leaven of Christian truth is working effectually in a region of such sad memories, and bringing forth better fruits than terror of such barbarous examples.

South West Ham possesses a magnificent library, known as the Canning Town Library. It is one of the most conveniently arranged libraries in the Metropolitan area. A marble tablet affixed in the Central Hall announces the fact that the building was opened by Mr. Passmore Edwards, in September, 1893. Though but a branch of the West Ham Central Library, it is superior in size and stock of books to many of the Central libraries

elsewhere. There are about 4,000 readers, and the daily average attendance is 2,000.

A second library was erected in 1905, in a portion of the Beckton Recreation Ground. Besides the lending library, which occupies the centre of the building, it contains a news room with accommodation for twenty readers, and a magazine room with tables for fifty-two readers.

There are two public recreation grounds in South West Ham, one in the Beckton Road, and the other in Hermit Road. It is difficult to exaggerate the boon conferred upon such crowded localities by the preservation of these open spaces. They are a source of delight and healthful recreation to thousands of people, and provide also healthy pastimes for large numbers of growing lads and young men.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

What an image of peace and rest  
Is this little church among its graves.

LONGFELLOW.

## EAST HAM.

East Ham, as its name implies, lies to the east of West Ham, on the outer confines of Greater London. It extends from the river Lea on the west to the river Roding on the east, terminating at Barking Creek, and is bounded on the south by the Thames.

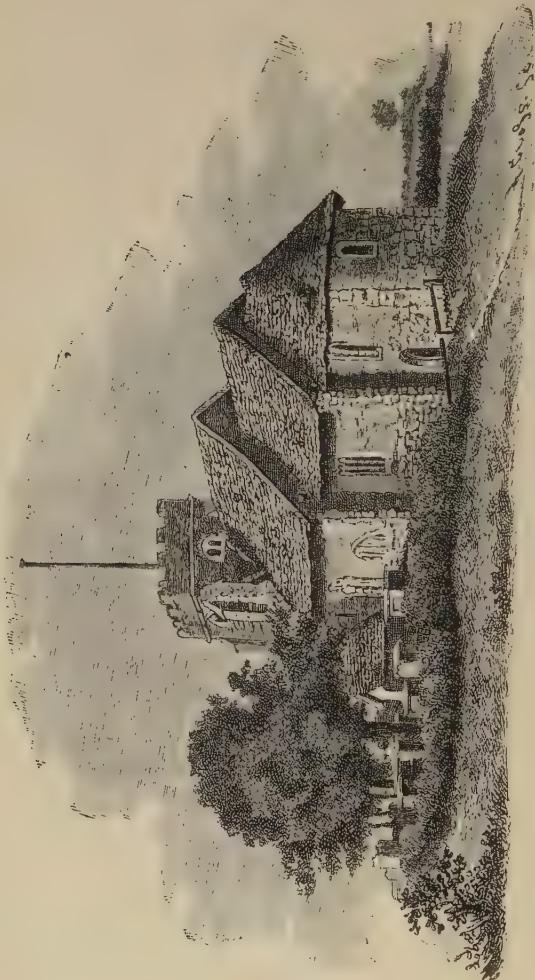
Originally it formed with West Ham one parish, which went by the common name of "Ham." It is not until 1181-2 that the distinction of East and West Ham first occurs. The area of East Ham, including Little Ilford, which was amalgamated with it in 1900, is 3,326 acres.

Although it cannot lay claim to a picturesque situation, it has many ancient and historical associations. It possesses one of the most remarkable churches, which for antiquity and interest ranks before many others.

There is, perhaps, no church in the vicinity of the Metropolis which can be compared with this



little old-fashioned structure, or which possesses architectural features of such unusual interest.



EAST HAM CHURCH.

Standing a little back from the road, in the midst of an ancient church-yard, it is approached by an avenue of lime trees. While the churches near London have generally been much altered, enlarged, and re-built to meet the requirements of an always growing population, it is surprising to find one substantially unaltered, "grown grey beneath the shadowy touch of time." It still retains the form in which it was originally built. The date of its foundation is hidden in the mists of the past, but it was most probably erected in the beginning of the twelfth century.

In position placed, as it were, on the very fringe of an extensive tract of marshland, it is at first difficult to conceive why a church should have been built in such a locality. Even in these days it would scarcely be called a desirable locality, and it must have been infinitely worse in those remote times.

But there is little doubt that both the neighbouring Abbey of Barking and that of West Ham called into being a rural population, tilling those Abbey lands, and requiring their spiritual welfare to be provided for, as well as those living in more favourite localities. Moreover, the old Manor-way—now called High Street South—passed very close to the spot where the church stands, and thus rendered it easy of access.

The church is dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene. It is built of flint and stone, and presents exter-

nally a very rural appearance from its low embattled tower. The edifice is a perfect Norman structure of a very simple, though somewhat unusual plan, and is so small that it has accommodation for only 150 people. It is not many years ago that the old spacious pews, some of which were provided with fire-places, were removed to make room for the present modern seats.

Like most of the churches of the early Christians, it consists of a nave without aisles, and two chancels. The upper chancel or apse, as it is termed, is semi-circular, and has narrow pointed windows. The tower arch is not very lofty, and has more the appearance of a doorway than of an arch. Looking from this arch into the church one cannot help being impressed by the dignity of its proportions, and the solemnity of its appearance even now. The large windows in the north and south walls of the nave are modern and presumably fill the small narrow circular-headed windows, by which the church was originally lighted.

The most striking architectural feature of this venerable building is found in its curious arcade of interlacing arches with zig-zag mouldings. On the south side of the wall of the upper chancel is constructed a very beautiful piscina, with a double drain, divided by a column forming two Gothic arches. The piscina is a shallow stone basin, with drains to take away the water in which the priest

used to wash his hands and rinse the chalice at the end of the celebration of mass.

One of the firsts objects of interest within the building is a marble font. An inscription round the bowl informs us that it was the gift of Sir Richard Heigham (1639), whose coat of arms is rudely inscribed upon it.

On the walls of the chancel and the apse may be discerned the beautiful, but much faded, remains of early English paintings, which were brought to light on removing the whitewash in 1850. It is very probable that the whole interior of the edifice was at one time richly decorated. Faded as this fresco painting now is, it is sufficient to give an idea of how richly even a small country church was adorned in those days.

Of the tower of the church, the upper portion of which is of comparatively recent date, little need be said. It contains an ancient bell, with the following inscription of a jingling Latin rhyme:

*"Dulcis sisto melis, vocor campana Gabrielis,"*  
which reproduced in English reads as follows:

Fixed to repeat  
Tones honey sweet,  
I am called the bell  
Of Gabriel.

There are several monuments inside the church from the 17th century downwards, some of which are of considerable importance and beauty. That

which is of most historical interest, is a splendid monument of black and white marble, in memory of the Right Honourable Edmund Neville, Lord Latimer, Earl of Westmoreland, and Dame Jane his wife. The Earl and Countess, as they are styled, are sculptured in marble, each kneeling within a niche, with a double lectern between them. He is accoutred in the armour of his time, with his helmet lying beside him. His Countess is attired in sweeping robes, lined and trimmed with ermine. On a lower step of the monument are figures representing their seven children, likewise in kneeling attitude, and as is usual on such memorials, their heights are nicely graduated.

The monument is rich in heraldy, there being no less than eleven coats of arms. It is strange that there is no date on it. Several other distinguished persons have also been interred in this church. Of monumental brass effigies there are but two. One, in memory of Hester Neve, who died 1610, is an interesting example of the costume of the period. This brass lies in the chancel, and is not only perfect and in excellent condition, but very well engraved. The figure stands upon a pedestal, erect, in the attitude of prayer. Several other distinguished persons have also been interred in the church.

In the church-yard lies the learned antiquary, Dr. Stukeley. As appears by the register he was

buried there in 1765. He chose this place for his interment some time before his death, when on a visit to Mr. Jos. Sims, the Vicar. Agreeably to his own request, "the turf was smoothly laid over his grave, without any monument." The spot was identified in 1889, and the coffin, with an embossed plate of brass bearing his name, was found to be still in good preservation.

Dr. Stukeley was rector of St. George the Martyr, Queen Square, London. He was a somewhat eccentric clergyman. On one occasion, in 1764, he postponed the service for an hour, in order that his congregation might witness an eclipse of the sun. When nearly seventy-six years old he preached for the first time in spectacles, from the text: "Now we see through a glass darkly"—the sermon being on the evil of too much study.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

What is pomp, rule, reign, but earth and dust?  
And live we how we can, yet die we must.

SHAKESPEARE.

EAST HAM (*continued*).

In olden times East Ham was, like West Ham, a favourite retreat of the nobility as well as of the wealthy citizens of London. Even within the memory of man it abounded with large and fashionable residences. These have, however, in lapse of ages been either demolished, to make room for modern shops and dwellings, or fallen into decay.

One of these old mansions is still standing in Green Street, and is locally known as Anne Boleyn's Castle. It is a fine red brick building, supposed to have been the seat of Edmund Neville, Earl of Westmoreland. It contains some apartments which were at one period fitted with royal magnificence.

Its most conspicuous object is an old embattled octagon tower, standing a short distance from the house, at the end of a wall skirting the lane, and surmounted by a turret. The room in the third



storey of this tower was at one time hung with leather, richly embossed with gold. An avaricious owner of the property burnt these costly hangings,



GREEN STREET HOUSE, OR ANNE BOLEYN CASTLE, AT EAST HAM.

in order to collect the precious metal, which was sold for £30. The subsequent owner, Mr. Morley, had the upper part of the tower, which had fallen

into decay, repaired (about 1800) and the roof recovered with copper.

An air of romance is gathered round this tower from a tradition, current in the neighbourhood, that it was built for Anne Boleyn by her royal lover, Henry VIII., in the days of his courtship. The tale, which may be read in the "Gentleman's Magazine" of 1833, is: "that Anne Boleyn had just lost a young gentleman to whom she was betrothed. As it was the custom that she should complete the twelve months of mourning for the lover, the King built for her amusement this tower, from which she had a view of the Thames from Greenwich to Gravesend."

Another tradition, still lingering about the neighbourhood and religiously believed in is, that when the fickle passion of Henry VIII. had been quelled, the fair victim was confined in this tower, and that she was taken from here to Greenwich, and so on to the Tower of London. It is said that the King was waiting there on the day she was beheaded, until the Tower gun was fired as a signal of the completion of the sanguinary deed. No pang of remorse, no wave of compassion, passed over him. On hearing the boom of the gun he started off with his attendants on a hunting expedition in the forest. The very next day he married Lady Jane Seymour.

Queen Anne Boleyn was executed within the

precincts of the Tower, in front of the little chapel of St. Peter in the Chains, where a stone with a railing and inscription now marks the spot. The historian Froude thus describes her beheading: "A little before noon on the 19th of May, 1536, Anne Boleyn, Queen of England, was led down to the green, where the young grass and the white daisies of summer were freshly bursting in the sunshine. A cannon stood loaded on the battlements, the motionless cannonier was ready with smoking linstock at his side, and when the crawling hand upon the dial of the great tower clock touched the mid-day hour, that cannon would tell to London that all was over."

On this spot also were buried the girlish Queen Catherine Howard, the aged Countess of Salisbury (mentioned in Chapter X.), and poor gentle little Lady Jane Grey, the Queen of nine days. It is now a gravelled enclosure, but it is said that grass has never consented to grow there since the executions.

In 1869 the mansion in Green Street was bought by Cardinal Manning, and about the end of 1870 opened as a Reformatory School for Roman Catholic boys, who were taught various useful trades and occupations, as shoe-making, tailoring, baking, etc. They were also instructed in the cultivation of land, there being about 14 acres adjoining the house.

Large additions have been made at the rear of

the house, but the old mansion and tower remain unaltered. A year or two ago the Reformatory School was removed to Walthamstow. The property is now put up for sale, and it will probably not be long before this old mansion, with its historic memories, will also be pulled down and its site covered with bricks and mortar.

Another mansion was Plashet House, with pretty gardens and a small park, the home of Mrs. Elizabeth Fry before her removal to West Ham, and at one time a centre of philanthropic activity. Here she passed twenty years of her married life, from 1809-1829, devoting much of her personal labours both to the temporal and spiritual needs of the surrounding poor. Plashet House has long since disappeared with the march of time, and the site of the house and grounds is now covered with modern dwelling houses. To perpetuate her memory and former connexion with the district, the late owner, Mr. Thomas Matthews, reserved a small plot for a memorial church, the present St. Stephen's Church, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1886 by Her Royal Highness Princess Louise, the Marchioness of Lorne.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

Onward its course the present keeps,  
Onward the constant current sweeps.

LONGFELLOW.

EAST HAM (*continued*).

The whole district of East Ham has developed at a great rate. Some twenty years ago it possessed neither gas lamps nor sewers. With the rapid growth of the population, and the development of new estates, it became a matter of vital importance to establish a proper system of drainage. The Council has given much attention to this matter, and East Ham is now provided with a comprehensive sewerage system, which is thought sufficient to meet all future requirements.

In 1898 the Urban District Council obtained Parliamentary sanction both for the lighting of the district by electricity, and for the construction of electric tramways. To-day all the thoroughfares are electrically illumined, and tramcars are running on all the main roads. Both undertakings have not only proved a great boon to the inhabitants, but have also yielded a substantial profit.

Since open spaces in the midst of the dwellings of the toiling masses are absolute necessities, and

materially contribute to the health of the people, no efforts have been spared to provide public recreation grounds. East Ham now owns three public Parks, viz., Plashet Park, Central Park, which also has an open swimming bath, and New Beckton Park.

In addition to these, there are the North Woolwich Gardens—now called the Royal Victoria Gardens—which are under the control of the London County Council. They are suitably laid out, and have a shaded terrace nearly a thousand feet long along the bank of the Thames. A portion of the Wanstead Flats is also within the East Ham district. They have within recent years been considerably improved. Its swamps have been gathered into lakes, and its rough ground made into one of the finest playing fields in East London. It is also worthy of notice that the Council have engaged brass bands to play in the Parks on two evenings in the week during the summer months.

However perfect the sanitary arrangements of a town may be, it is impossible to prevent the intrusion of infectious diseases. To provide the means by which cases of infection could be prevented from spreading, an Isolation Hospital has been established between the Roman and Boundary roads, which was opened in 1902. All small-pox cases are removed to a separate Hospital at Dagenham.

The East Ham Hospital, in the Shrewsbury

Road, has been erected chiefly through the munificence of Mr. Passmore Edwards, and was opened for the reception of patients in 1902. It has accommodation for twenty beds, and is entirely supported by voluntary contributions.

East Ham is unique in that it has no factories or public works, except the Gas Works at Beckton, so called after Mr. S. A. Beck, who was the Governor of the Company when the land was purchased. They are amongst the most extensive works yet constructed, covering about 150 acres of land. The works were laid out in 1869, and give employment to 5,000 hands in summer and 8,000 in winter.

The primary object was to provide gas for the West End of London, and two mains, four feet in diameter, run through London to Kensal Green. Numerous dwellings have been provided in close proximity to the works, for the accommodation of the workmen, besides a Church, an Institute, a canteen, and a recreation ground. The former dreary marshland has thus been converted into a busy thriving colony.

The parish of East Ham is also much improved by the Barking Road, sixty feet wide, which was made exactly a hundred years ago (1807-1810). Joining the Commercial Road from the East India Docks, it crosses the river Lea by an iron bridge,



and runs through the centre of this district. Before the road was made there was only a narrow lane leading from East Ham to Wall End, and thence over two bridges to the town of Barking. One of these bridges, called Cow Bridge, is said to have been so narrow, that no vehicle could pass it, unless the wheels on one side were first removed.

Thousands of acres of marshland, both of East and West Ham, are considerably below the level of the water, and consequently liable to be drowned by the overflow of the Thames at every tide. It became, therefore, necessary to erect walls and embankments to stem the inroad of the water from the river, and at the same time to construct water-gangs to drain the marshes. Drainage and embankment have always gone hand in hand from time immemorial. The two duties are indeed inseparable.

How long since and by whom this large and fruitful tract was won from the river, it is impossible to say. There can, however, be but little doubt that for the first embankment we are indebted to the Romans, who were as skilled in the arts and sciences of peace as in those of war. We are told by the Roman historian Tacitus, that during their occupation of Great Britain, the Romans forced the native Britons to work in clearing woods and draining marshes.

But it is scarcely possible that these gigantic

operations, which are a memorable triumph of human industry, were entirely carried through by that military and masterful nation. Moreover, there is sufficient evidence to prove that the river was not embanked at one time, or even in one generation, but that it was the work of centuries. Little by little the waters have been driven back, the channel of the river narrowed, and its course straightened. The land thus re-claimed was soon brought under cultivation, and proved fertile and valuable. The maintenance of the river walls in this district is now entrusted to the authorities of the two boroughs of East and West Ham.

It is interesting to note that there is a strip of land on the north bank of the Thames, extending as far as Barking Creek, which belongs to the county of Kent. Thence originated the saying "that more wealth pours through Kent than in any other county of England." It has been conjectured that at some early period the Thames changed its course at this point, and thus detached this land from the rest of Kent. But this explanation seems very improbable, since the embankments on the northern side of the river still stand exactly as the Romans left them.

Nor is the local tradition worthy of belief, that East Ham having refused to bury the bodies of drowned persons which had been washed ashore from the southern to the northern bank of the

river, Kent fulfilled the duty of burying them, and received in compensation 500 acres on the Essex side.

In Halsted's "History of Kent," we find it recorded that Count Haimo, Sheriff of Kent in William the Conqueror's time, had land on both sides of the river at Woolwich. In this way the property on the north bank, which naturally was also within his jurisdiction, became included in the county of Kent. This seems to be the most plausible, and is, probably, the true solution of the question.



## CHAPTER XL.

Education alone can conduct us to that enjoyment which is, at once, best in quality and infinite in quantity.

MANN.

EAST HAM.

CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

Even less than fifty years ago the only place of public worship was the old parish church of St. Mary Magdalene. It was not until 1866 that the Church of St. John the Baptist was built, which is now used for a Boys' Sunday School.

Owing to the rapid increase in the population, it soon became necessary to provide further church accommodation, and during the last twenty years the ministers of the various religious denominations have used every endeavour to meet the spiritual needs of the district. There are at the present time eight churches in connexion with the Established Church of England, with a clergy amounting to twenty-nine in all, and twice that number of Non-conformist Churches and Chapels, besides two Roman Catholic places of worship.

There are few districts where within such a comparatively small compass, so many schools have

been established, with such an enormous number of scholars. Before the Education Act came into force, the task of education was almost entirely confined to the Church and to private enterprise. In 1873 the School Board came into office, and since then education has made a great advance. During its tenure of office the School Board built no less than eighteen schools, with an attendance of more than 23,000 children, while the two non-provided Roman Catholic schools are attended by 768 children.

In 1903 the School Board ceased to exist, and its powers and obligations, as well as its staff, were transferred to a special Education Committee. On the district becoming a Municipal Borough in 1904, it became necessary to formulate a new scheme for the appointment of a new Committee. It was decided "that the Committee shall consist of twenty-five members, including persons of experience in higher elementary and technical education. Not less than twenty shall be members of the Council, of which the Mayor shall be one, and one shall be a woman."

The pupil teacher centre, which was established and carried on by the late School Board, and used for the instruction of pupil teachers—solely from schools in East Ham—as well as the higher elementary or secondary education, are under the control of the Essex County Council.

There are also schools for the physically and mentally defective, the blind, and the deaf.

The Technical College, which adjoins the Town Hall, was opened on March 18th, 1905, by H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. The College contains a large assembly room, physical, chemical, and electrical laboratories, carpenters' and plumbers' workshops, kitchen and laundry, and the necessary class rooms.

The extraordinary growth of the Borough made such a well-equipped Institute peculiarly appropriate and desirable. Technical education is now acknowledged to be one of the great essentials of the day. Without it there will be but little hope of a successful commercial or industrial career, in face of the fierce competition of our continental neighbours.

Although but in its third year the College has made remarkable progress, there being over 2,000 entries in the various classes. It is also noteworthy that many of the pupils have already distinguished themselves in the local examinations of the Oxford University.

During the day time a Secondary School for boys and girls is carried on. Its object is to give the pupils a thoroughly practical education, supplemented by sound teaching in art and science. For the winter months Evening Classes for both sexes are arranged, in which geometry, building

construction, book-keeping, commercial arithmetic, cookery, and dressmaking are taught, each department being efficiently staffed.

As East Ham is the home of the skilled artisan, these evening classes offer great advantages to young mechanics and artisans who wish to acquire a knowledge of geometry, mathematics, mechanics, and drawing.

In 1895 the Urban District Council adopted the Public Library Act, and in the following year the library in Elizabeth Street, North Woolwich, was opened. It is built on a small scale, but has a cosy and comfortable room.

The second library, situate in Plashet Grove, was given by Mr. Passmore Edwards and opened in 1899. The public accommodation is arranged on the ground floor, and comprises a general hall, around which all the public rooms open.

The third library, which occupies a commanding position upon a corner site in the Romford Road, was provided by Mr. Andrew Carnegie (1905) to serve the population in the Manor Park Ward.

The Central Library, on the Town Hall site, was opened on March 26th, 1908.





## THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE BOROUGH OF EAST HAM.

The Arms of the Borough of East Ham bear the device "*Progressio cum Populo*"—Progress with the people—and are intended to represent the contrast between the Ham of Norman times, when East Ham belonged to one lord, and the rapid growing commercial town of to-day.

The torches on the shield represent the gas making industry at Beckton, and the ship in full sail is emblematical of the docks, whence cargoes go to all parts of the world.

The rising sun is typical of the ascending of East Ham, which has within the last few years developed with such marvellous rapidity.

The crosier, which occupies one half of the shield, is an emblem of pastoral authority and care. It refers to the ancient Abbey of West Ham, which was founded by William de Montfichet in 1135, and endowed by him with all his lands in East and West Ham.



MONTFICHET.



ABBAY.

## CHAPTER XLI.

Deem not the irrevocable past  
 As wholly wasted, wholly vain,  
 If rising on its wrecks at last  
 To something nobler we attain.

LONGFELLOW.

## BOROUGH OF EAST HAM.

East Ham is perhaps the most remarkable example of rapid transformation from a rural to an urban community. Its marvellous growth and development is absolutely without parallel in the history of the United Kingdom. Even thirty years ago it was still a dull straggling village with a scattered population.

Trade does not seem to have been brisk. Besides a few shops, there were but two bakers in the village, and one butcher, and the nearest doctor was at Barking. In 1801 its population—including the former civil parish of Little Ilford—was 1,250; fifty years later it had risen to 1,737; and in 1871 to 5,009. Since then it has been increasing by leaps and bounds. According to the last census of 1901, it numbered 96,018 souls, and at the present day its population is estimated at over 120,000.

Like all rapidly growing suburban towns, it has entirely rubbed off its once rural character. From a village of market gardens for the production of cabbages and onions, it has grown into a busy town. It is surprising to see how rapidly building estates have been developed, and in how short a time the whole area of cultivated fields and meadows has been converted into streets of crowded dwellings, almost entirely inhabited by city clerks, artisans, gas-workers, and labourers.

Nor has East Ham improved in point of numbers only. With the growth of the population there has of necessity been an equal progress on the lines of municipal developments. The streets have been widened and converted into important thoroughfares, along which the electric tramcars carry the people to and from all parts of the Borough. Even ten years ago, there were in the whole district no public buildings worthy of the name not even a decent railway station. Now there are a palatial Town Hall, a Technical College, and numerous other public buildings, besides miles of electric tramways.

In 1904 East Ham was accorded a Royal Charter of Incorporation, by which the new Corporate body took over the duties of the former Urban District Council, which had governed the town since 1894. The Corporation is composed of a Mayor, six Aldermen, and eighteen Councillors, each



EAST HAM TOWN HALL.

of the six Wards, into which the Borough is divided, being represented by one Alderman and three Councillors. As a Municipal Borough East Ham has naturally acquired an increased dignity and importance, to which as an Urban District Council it could never attain. Its first Mayor was Mr. now Sir John Henry Bethell, M.P.

The Town Hall, which was opened in 1903, is a handsome structure, and an emblem in itself of the wonderful growth of the municipal idea within recent years. It has handsome gables, large windows, and a green slate roof, dominated by a handsome well-proportioned clock tower, rising to a height of 150 feet. The interior is equally well designed. Besides the official departments, a Council Chamber, a Mayor's parlour, and several Committee rooms, it has a fine and lofty assembly room, which has its own distinct approach. This room is lighted by large windows, and provides seating for 1,200 people, independent of the spacious platform and organ recess at the end.

Opposite the municipal offices of the Town Hall stands the new Police Station, one of the finest buildings of its kind. Its internal arrangements are admirably fitted in every way for the purpose for which it is designed. One distinct feature of this station is the elaborate manner in which the cells are built. Each cell is lighted day and night, and in direct communication with the Inspector's office.

Since the year 1906 East Ham also owns a Commission of the Peace, so that all East Ham police cases, which until then had to be taken to the Beacontree Bench of the Court House in Stratford, can now be dealt with on the spot.

## CHAPTER XLII.

Our lives are rivers, gliding free  
 To that unfathom'd boundless sea—  
 The silent grave.

LONGFELLOW.

## THE RIVER RODING.

It may not be out of place to devote the last chapter of this history to the river Roding, which forms the boundary between East Ham and Bark-ing. The Roding takes its rise in Easton Park, near Dunmow.

Here a little spring bubbles up clear and cool from underneath a bed of moss and fern. At first a tiny brook, it soon attains strength, and growing wider wanders southwards through an extensive agricultural district, to which it gives the name of the Rodings. Winding its tranquil course through fertile tracts of meadow land, flanked by richly-tilled cornfields, it passes through Ongar and Abridge. It now turns in an easterly direction, and skirting the wooded groves of Wanstead Park, presently reaches Ilford, where it is spanned by a bridge.

At this spot the stream was forded in olden times, hence the name of Ilford, derived from the

Anglo-Saxon word "eald-ford," which means "old-ford." This ford has been the scene of many a sad drowning fatality, remembered even to this day.

Hurrying on, it assumes again a more rural character. Its banks are fringed with purple loose-strife and meadow-sweet. It now has attained such size as may float a brown-sailed barge upon its breast or a light canoe.

Proceeding on its course past the old Roman encampment of Uphall, which once echoed to the tread of armed soldiers, it passes beneath the iron Railway Bridge. Then flowing quietly along past the old town of Barking, it widens and forms the Barking Creek, where it empties itself into the mighty Thames. Its course of about 35 miles is now complete—its race is run.

As the tide ascends the river beyond Ilford, the low-lying land has been protected from the inroads of the Thames by embankments, which seem to have been commenced at an extremely early age, like those of the Thames, of which mention has been made in a former chapter.

Time was, and not so long ago, that ship-building was carried on on both sides of the Roding, which gave employment to many hands. In 1730 the river was deepened to allow barges to come up from Barking Creek for delivering merchandise upon the wharves at Ilford. Now all is changed, and the barge traffic has greatly fallen off.



It is not many years ago that the Roding was still a clear, purling stream, bright with sparkling waters, and abounding in fish. Latterly, however, it fell upon evil times and degenerated into an open sewer, and thus became a source of danger to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. At length the ruling authorities of East Ham have taken the necessary steps to remedy this evil by improving the system of drainage. So we may hope that the Roding, which for generations has been a favourite resort of the people, may some day be restored to its former beauty, and again become a source of joy and pleasure to the dwellers on its banks.

“Have we not”—writes a former curate of Little Ilford—“in this ever-flowing river, hurrying on its way, a picture of the course of life? Setting out from innocent childhood, light-headed and careless it passes into youth, when the waters get often soiled with sin and tainted with the world. Emerging once again, stronger and deeper, and quickly flowing on, life broadens into calm old age, till it meets with the cold, dark river of death, and is swept out into the great sea of Eternity.”



## CONCLUSION.

In concluding this short history of East and West Ham, it is a pleasure to record that the two parishes have been on friendly terms for centuries. While each has maintained its independence they have at the same time benefited one another by mutual concessions. Their growth in all directions has been in recent years most remarkable, and is, undoubtedly, due in a large measure, to the enterprise of their respective Corporations.

Whether it be in the cause of education or general sanitation, whether it be in the establishment of tram lines or in the management of open spaces, both Councils have discharged their onerous and important duties with credit to themselves, and used every endeavour to advance the prosperity of their respective Boroughs.

In fact, as regards the completeness and thorough efficiency of Municipal work, the two Corporations will bear favourable comparison with any city in the Kingdom. May the two Boroughs continue to flourish for many generations to come, and foster that pure feeling of friendliness which has ever subsisted between them!











